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**NORTH AMERICA
MONTHLY NEWSLETTER**

February 2024

Good afternoon,

I'm writing to you as a state and local government colleague to let you know about resources from J-PAL North America that have been transformative in my government's work to address our highest priorities.

Like you, King County, Washington is working to address the impacts historic levels of **income inequality**, rising **housing instability**, and **climate change** have on our local communities. As you know, these are not simple challenges. They require innovation in what we do as local governments and how we do it. One bright spot is that we've been able to leverage significant federal funding from sources like the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, and Inflation Reduction Act for innovative programs to address these challenges. However, these are one-time funds with looming deadlines: for example, ARPA's obligation deadline is in December of this year.

As the King County Evidence & Impact Officer, I've been working alongside our program staff to build up an evidence base as we invest these federal dollars, and I encourage you to join me. Right now, opportunity remains to invest federal dollars into strengthening data and evaluation capacity and running rigorous evaluations. By doing so, we can deeply understand what is working for our residents and where obstacles remain in how we serve them. This allows us to meaningfully transform our policies and programs for the greatest local impact. In doing so, we are also helping to build a body of knowledge across the United States for continued investment in programs that are proven to support equitable community outcomes. In King County, for example, we have ambitious **goals** to advance equity and reduce climate impact in our region. We know that a major source of climate pollution comes from residential energy use. Through LEVER's Evaluation Incubator, we are investing time with J-PAL affiliated researchers to investigate the key barriers for households in accessing programs providing clean home heating systems.

The great news is that you are not on your evaluation journey alone! We have benefited enormously through our partnership with J-PAL North America and **Results for America** in their **Leveraging Evidence and Evaluation for Equitable Recovery (LEVER)** initiative—a suite of offerings designed to support state and local governments in using evidence and evaluation to invest in economic mobility. Through convenings, trainings, technical assistance, and connections to other governments, LEVER is contributing to a culture of learning and evidence in King County. The full suite of LEVER's supports is available to your

jurisdiction too. I encourage you to check out the resources featured below to learn more about how LEVER can help your government achieve its highest priorities and serve your communities better.

Don't hesitate to reach out to lever@povertyactionlab.org if you'd like to learn more and to me if you'd like to hear more about King County's evaluation and evidence work. I hope to see you at future LEVER convenings and events and to learn from your successes.

Be well,

Carrie S. Cihak

Evidence & Impact Officer | J-PAL North America 2023 Evidence Champion
King County, WA



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Upcoming opportunities for state and local governments

The LEVER program is offering several resources and trainings for government jurisdictions to build and use evidence this spring and summer. For those interested in evidence generation, the call for letters of interest to our [evaluation incubator](#) is open until April 1. Hear from a 2023 participant about how the experience advanced the County of San Diego's evidence generation priorities [on the J-PAL blog](#). Are you and your team looking to build your capacity for data use and evaluation? Apply to Results for America's virtual [training sprint](#) before March 6 and J-PAL North America's annual [Evaluating Social Programs](#) course in Cambridge before April 4. [Learn more about these opportunities on our LEVER webpage >>](#)



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Intergenerational poverty requires multifaceted solutions

A recent report by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine identifies seven domains (e.g., education, health) driving intergenerational poverty and showcases evidence-backed solutions. In an [interview](#) with J-PAL staff, J-PAL affiliated researcher [Greg Duncan](#) (UC Irvine)—chair of the report authoring committee—explained that while there are no “silver bullets” for ending intergenerational poverty, there are several policies that have been proven to make a big difference.

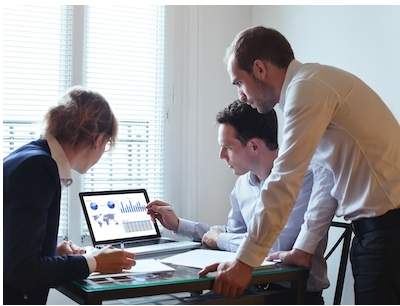


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Regression to the mean: Why it matters for impact evaluation

Regression to the mean is a statistical phenomenon where extreme outcomes tend to be followed by more moderate outcomes—closer to the mean. In the field of social policy, this could mean that individuals selected to participate in a program because of an extreme signal—such as a concerning medical test result or a failing math grade—will naturally return back toward an average outcome without any intervention. For policymakers, regression to the mean can lead us to believe that a program is more effective than it actually is, particularly in programs which start, by design, in response to extreme signals. Fortunately, randomized evaluations allow researchers to distinguish between regression to the mean and the impact of a program. [Learn more from real-world examples on the J-PAL blog >>](#)

FEATURED EVALUATION SUMMARY



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Understanding which components of homelessness prevention programs improve housing stability for youth and families with children

One out of four people experiencing homelessness on any given night are children or youth between the ages of 18 and 24. Many homelessness prevention programs target individuals at risk of experiencing homelessness to provide case management and financial assistance, but there is a lack of evidence on whether both components are necessary for an effective program. [Researchers evaluated the impact](#) of case management and emergency financial assistance compared to only financial assistance on housing stability for youth and families with children in King County, Washington. The evaluation found no significant differences in housing stability outcomes between the two groups.

FEATURED RESEARCH RESOURCE



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Formalizing research partnerships and establishing 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 involves 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. Topics include questions to consider when developing a project scope, timeline, communications strategy, and formal agreements between researchers and implementing partners

FEATURED EVENT

Disrupting Poverty Conference 2024 - A Path Forward: On March 25 and 26, J-PAL North America's implementation partner, EMPATH, will hold its biennial conference at Boston University. In this two-day conference, practitioners, policy makers, philanthropists, and academics from around the world will engage in conversations about evidence-based strategies for disrupting poverty. [Laura Ruiz](#), Research Manager at J-PAL North America, will be presenting on randomized evaluations and a recent RCT of the EMPATH program. Visit [the website](#) for more information and to register for the conference.

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