



J-PAL State and Local Innovation Initiative Webinar

J-PAL North America (MIT)

January 23, 2018

povertyactionlab.org/stateandlocal



Who we are



Julia Chabrier
Senior Policy Manager
J-PAL North America

Initiative Manager



Melissa Kearney
Professor of Economics
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Initiative Co-chair



Corinne Weaver
Director of Research & Evaluation
Catholic Charities Forth Worth

Agenda

- I. Introduction to J-PAL
- II. The J-PAL State and Local Innovation Initiative
- III. Opportunities for Randomized Evaluations
- IV. Randomized Evaluation in Practice
- V. How to Apply
- VI. Q&A

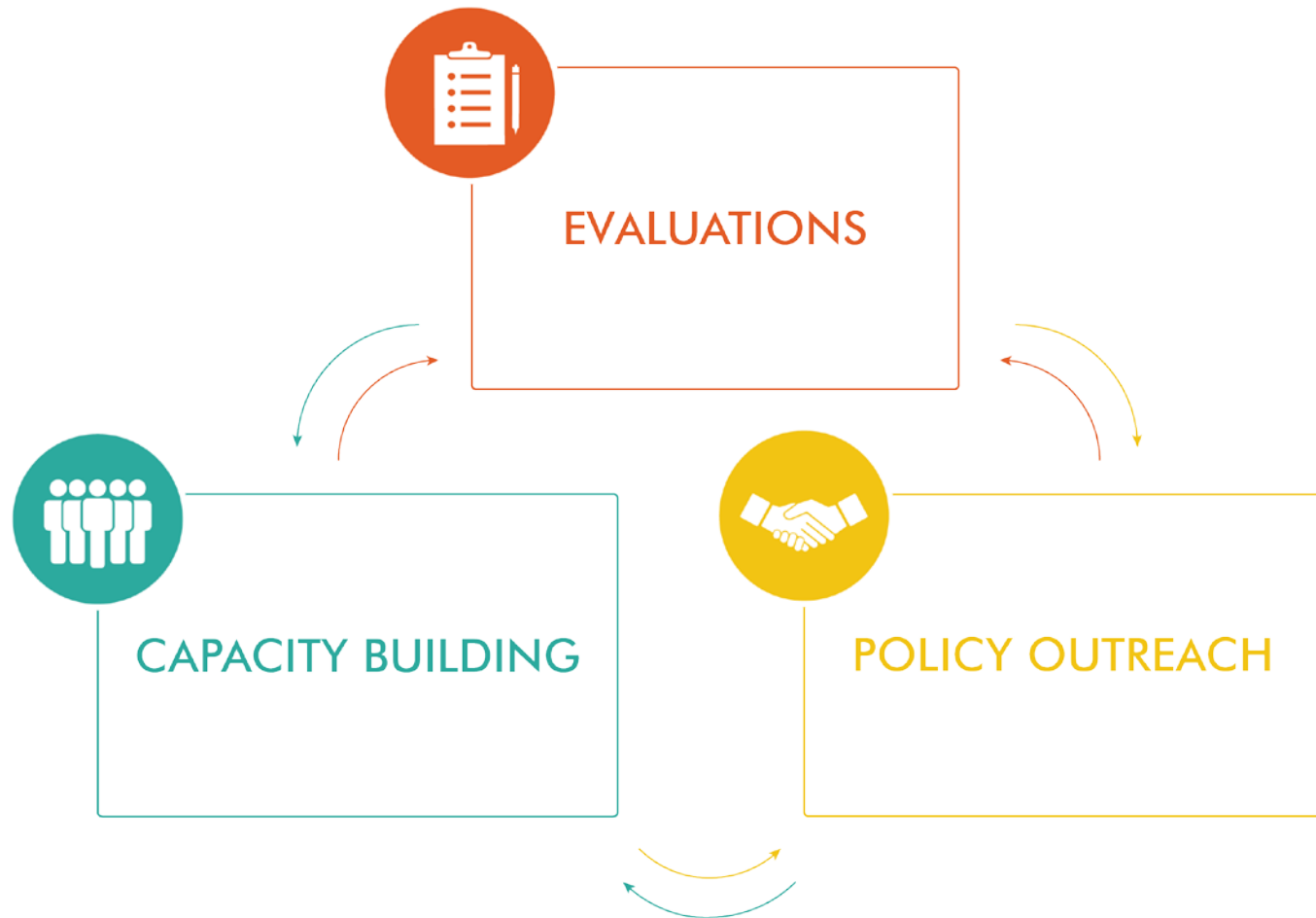


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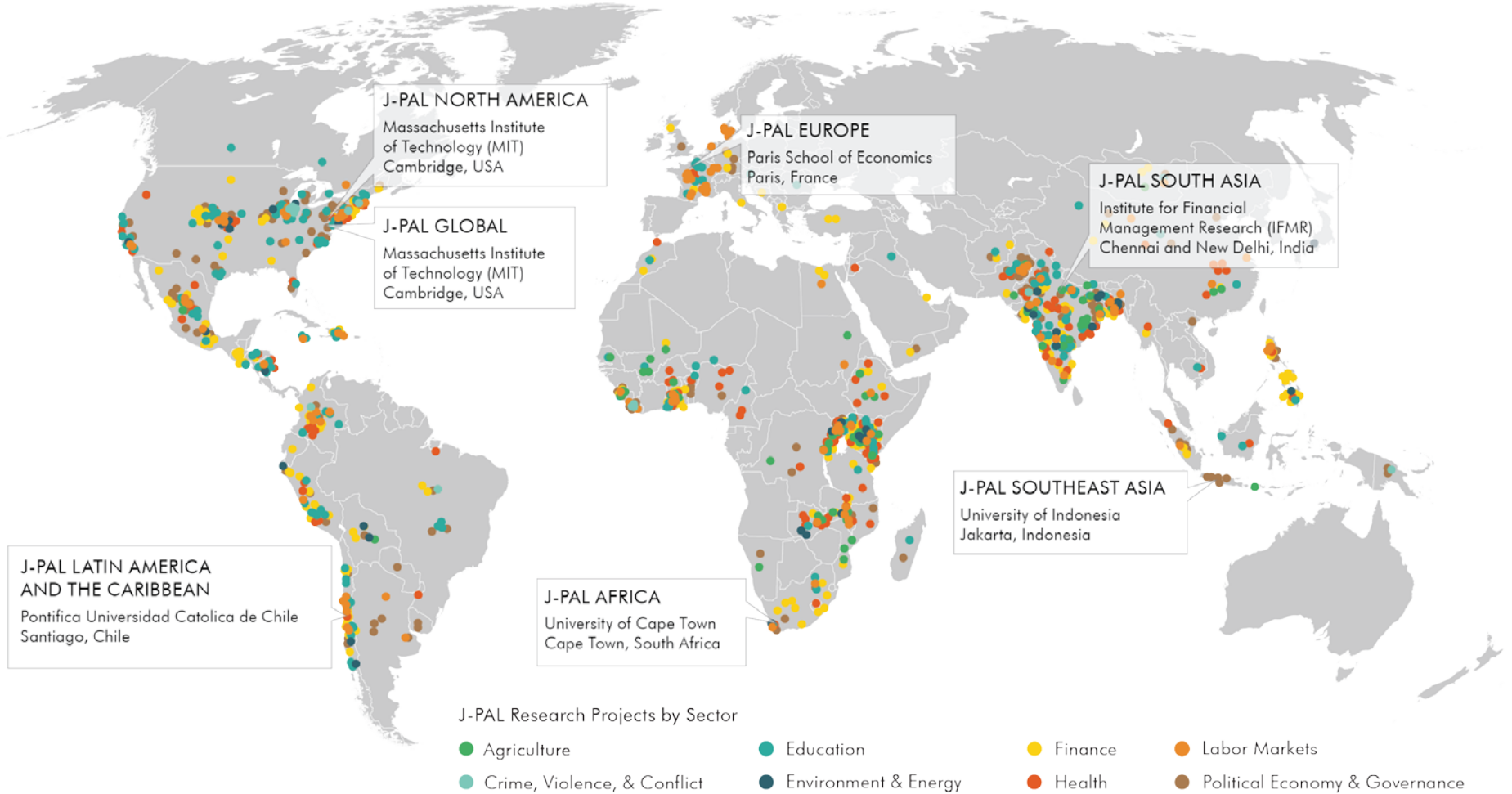
J-PAL's mission is to reduce poverty by ensuring that policy is informed by scientific evidence



J-PAL's network of affiliated researchers



J-PAL: 870+ ongoing and completed projects in 80 countries



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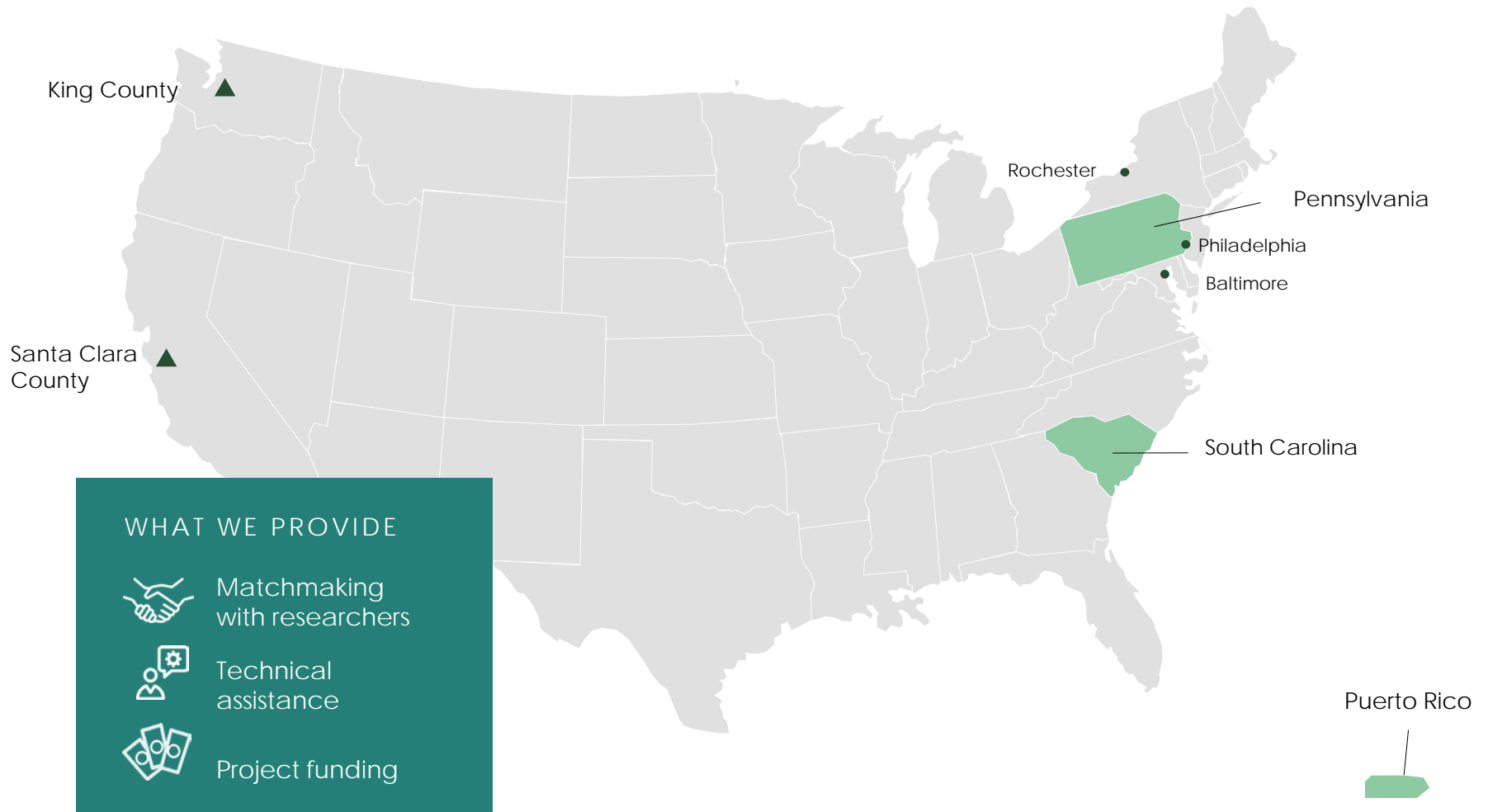
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Goals of the J-PAL State and Local Innovation Initiative

- 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 partners

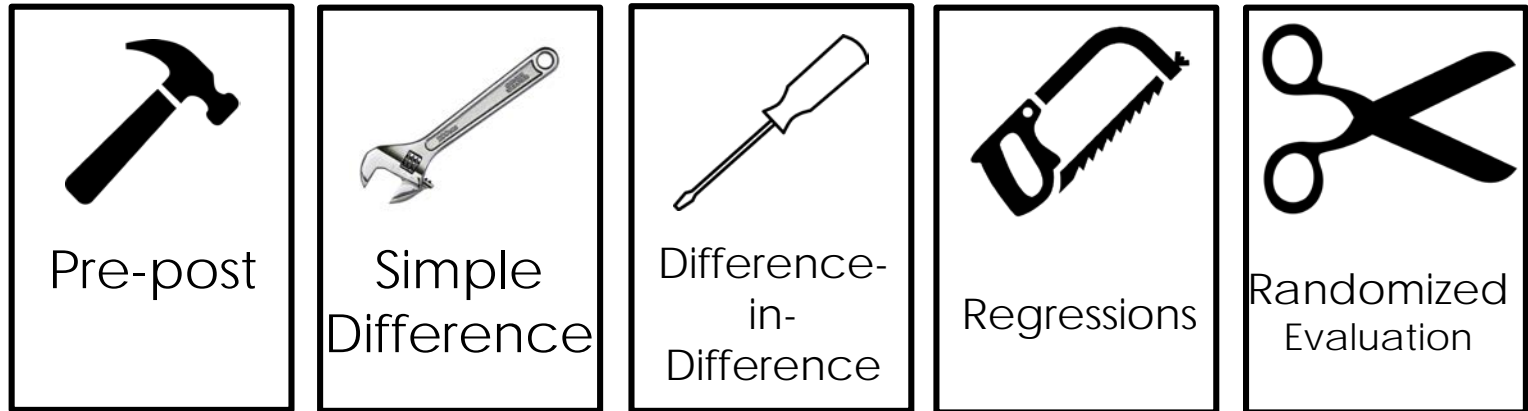


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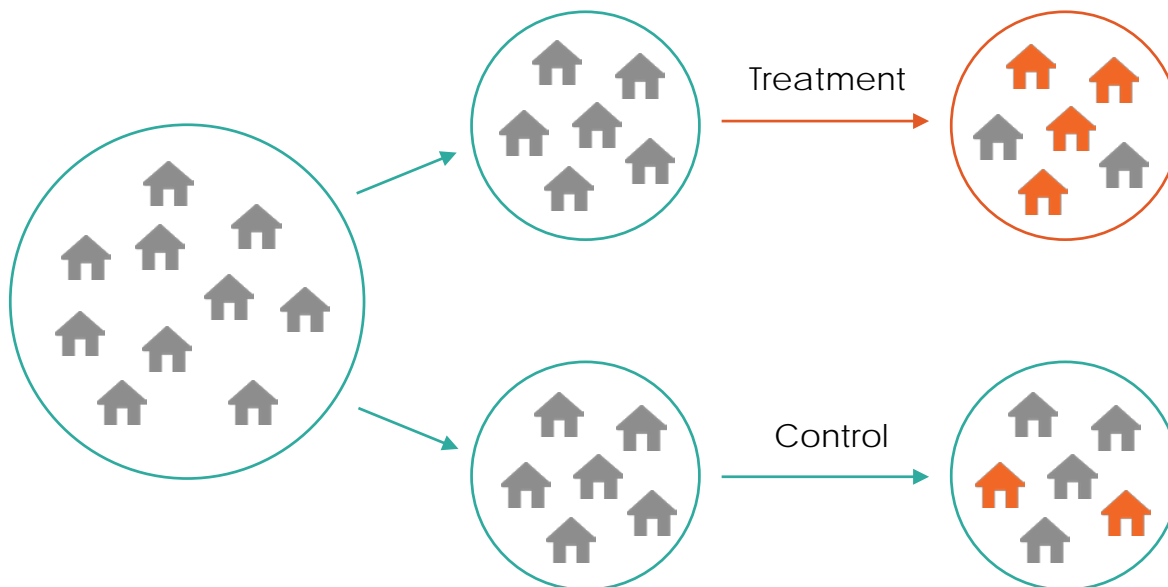


Methods as tools



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.



The two groups continue to be identical, except for the program

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

When to consider randomizing

- When your program is:
 - Being piloted
 - Expanding to a new location
 - Oversubscribed
 - Adding a new component

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

- **Too small:** sample size is too small to detect a meaningful differences in outcomes
- **Too early:** still ironing out logistics
- **Too late:** already serving everyone who is eligible, and no random assignment was built in
- When **a positive impact has been proven**, and we have the resources to serve everyone

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Stay the Course



Melissa Kearney
Professor of Economics
University of Maryland

Co-investigators:
William Evans, Brendan
Perry, James X. Sullivan



Corinne Weaver
Director of Research & Evaluation
Catholic Charities Forth Worth

Need for research at CCFW

- Focus shifted from **serving those in need** to **ending poverty** one family at a time.
- **Rigorous evidence** of what works and what doesn't promotes **stewardship**.
- Led to broader focus on **quality, evaluation, and impact**.

Motivation for Stay the Course

- Community colleges offer low-income students a **cost-effective** way to achieve higher levels of education and prepare for the demands of the labor market.
- However, there is a “**completion crisis**” and not completing a degree can be financially crippling.
- Among first time, degree-seeking students who entered Tarrant Community College in 2011, **14.8% earned a degree in 4 years** and **only 2.6% graduated in 2 years**

Barriers to graduation

1. College costs
2. Academic under-preparation
3. Institutional obstacles
 - Few resources per student
 - Complex systems
4. Personal, non-academic obstacles
 - Financial and family issues
 - Planning & time management

Stay the Course: Comprehensive case management

- An intervention designed to promote persistence and degree completion among low-income community college students
- Two primary components:
 - Intensive Case Management
 - Emergency Financial Assistance



The RCT partnership



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LAB FOR ECONOMIC
OPPORTUNITIES

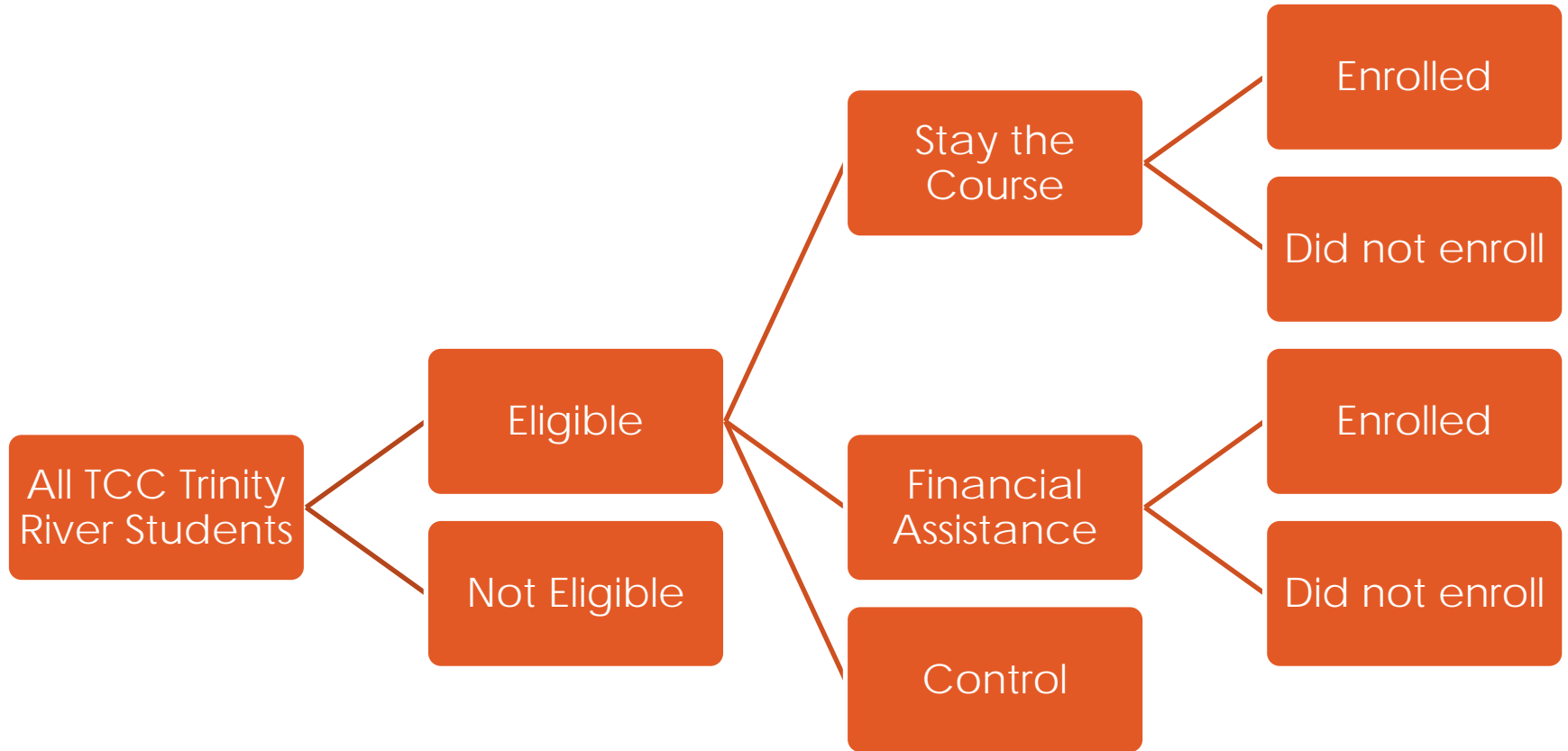


Catholic
Charities
Fort Worth



Tarrant[®]
County
College

Evaluation design



Administrative data

- Tarrant Community College
 - Enrollment
 - Course completion
 - Degrees earned (including certificates)
 - Demographics
 - Course results (e.g., dropped classes, GPA)
- National Student Clearinghouse
 - Enrollment and degrees earned anywhere

What have we learned?

- Promising results:
 - Participating in Stay the Course **increases persistence and degree completion**, especially among women
 - Back-of-the-envelope calculation suggests that **projected earnings gains are greater than program costs** (\$5,640 per student for 3-year program)
 - No effect of receiving Emergency Financial Assistance only
- Next steps:
 - Examine longer-term outcomes
 - Measure effects on earnings
 - Scale-up and replication
 - Apply learnings to CCFW's work

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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
 - Flexible pilot funding of up to \$100,000
 - 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
 - The program or policy you would like to evaluate
 - How many people are currently reached
 - Potential opportunity for a randomized evaluation
 - Access to data for measuring outcomes

Timeline

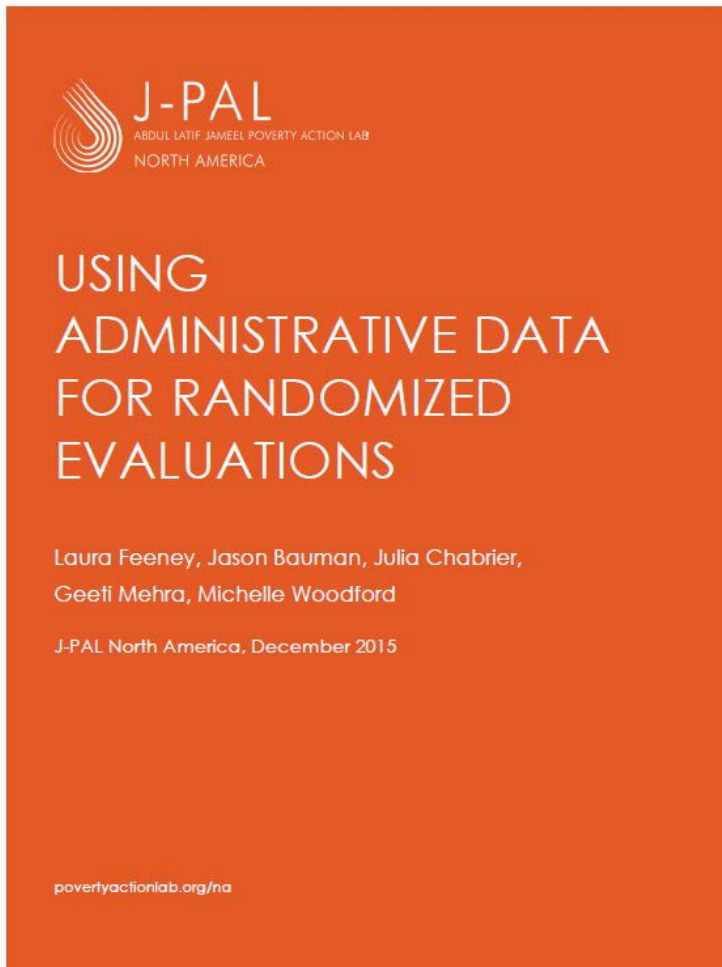
- **March 2, 2018** – Deadline to submit letters of interest
- **Week of April 23, 2018** – Finalists invited to submit full proposal
- **Week of August 6, 2018** – Winners announced
- Go to povertyactionlab.org/stateandlocal for more information

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Learn more



www.povertyactionlab.org/stateandlocal



Thank you

Julia Chabrier

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