J-PAL NORTH AMERICA'S WORK OF THE FUTURE INITIATIVE

J-PAL
ABDUL LATIF JAMEEL POVERTY ACTION LAB
NORTH AMERICA

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J-PAL North America's Work of the Future Initiative

identifies effective strategies to increase opportunities for workers and reduce the economic barriers and social challenges associated with the changing nature of work.

MOTIVATION

Today's labor market isn't working for everyone.

Millions of workers across North America and throughout the industrialized and developing world are grappling with the impacts of automation, stagnating wages, and a rapidly changing labor market. Some workers can't access jobs that pay living wages or provide adequate benefits or protections, while others struggle to adapt to industry changes brought about by new technologies. Workers may not have access to the education or training necessary to advance or change careers, leaving them stuck in low-wage, insecure employment.

Social service providers, government and industry leaders, and policymakers are working to generate potential solutions to these challenges. While many organizations across North America are creating innovative, potentially scalable strategies to help workers overcome these barriers, we still lack rigorous evidence on which strategies are most effective. Many well-intentioned ideas remain untested, leaving decision-makers without the evidence needed to make critical decisions about which programs and policies to invest in.

To generate solutions that increase opportunity, reduce disparities, and help all workers navigate the work of the future, we need more rigorous research on what works. Our initiative gives organizations the tools they need to generate and apply this rigorous evidence.

INNOVATION COMPETITION

Our **Innovation Competition** provides direct support to organizations and agencies interested in evaluating their program or policy related to the changing nature of work. Selected partners work closely with J-PAL staff to develop a rigorous randomized evaluation to better understand their program or policy's impact.

Selected partners also have access to J-PAL's network of top academic researchers; partners that collaborate with a J-PAL affiliated researcher are eligible to jointly apply for funding through our bi-annual Request for Proposals to cover the costs of evaluation.

Partners selected through our innovation competition have access to:

Matchmaking with researchers	Technical Assistance	Evaluation funding

Matchmaking with researchers. Selected partners will work with J-PAL staff to develop partnerships and connections with J-PAL's network of experienced academic researchers to design and implement a randomized evaluation.

Technical assistance. Selected partners will receive technical assistance from J-PAL staff on study design and feasibility, and initial flexible funding to help get a randomized evaluation off the ground.

Evaluation funding. Selected partners that collaborate with a researcher from J-PAL's network to design a high-quality evaluation are eligible to jointly apply for funding through our researcher-facing Request for Proposals.

LEARN MORE

Visit povertyactionlab.org/work-of-the-future/competition to learn more about J-PAL's Work of the Future Innovation Competition and how to apply.
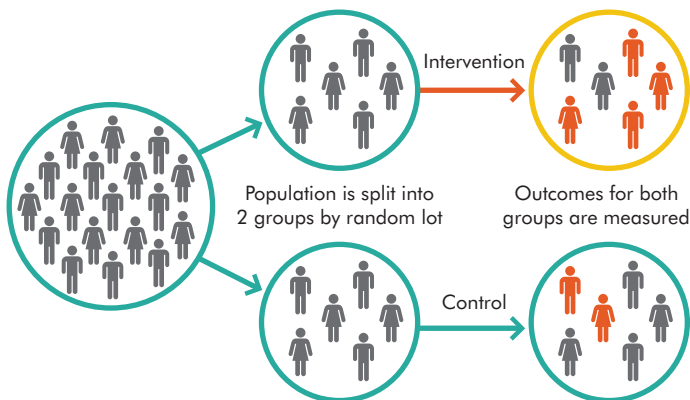
OUR FOCUS

We work with social service providers, nonprofits, industry and government leaders, and academic researchers to evaluate programs or policies aimed at addressing the changing nature of work in North America. While we are open to any proposal focused broadly on these aims, we are particularly excited about evaluating programs or policies focused on:

- Programs designed to retrain or reskill workers;

- Strategies to improve traditional and non-traditional educational institutions;

- Innovative apprenticeship systems, sectoral employment programs, and alternative approaches for skill certification;

- Strategies to facilitate worker transitions between occupations and industries;

- Organizational practices that improve productivity, skills, earnings, or employment prospects

- Opportunities in alternative work arrangements;

- The impact/opportunity of changing transportation modalities.

This list is not exhaustive: any proposal that explores strategies that facilitate skills acquisition, job finding, employment stability, earnings and productivity growth, or work-life balance is potentially in scope.

WHY DO WE FOCUS ON RANDOMIZED EVALUATIONS?

J-PAL North America supports leaders in developing randomized evaluations to better understand the impact of their program or policy. Randomized evaluations are widely recognized as a credible and convincing method for estimating program impact. In these studies, a sample of eligible program participants is randomly separated into two groups: one group that is offered the program and one group that is not offered the program.

Population is split into 2 groups by random lot   Intervention   Outcomes for both groups are measured   Control

By randomly assigning participants to two groups, we can be confident that, with a large enough sample, these two groups are similar on average before the start of the program. When outcomes are measured after the program ends, the only difference between the two groups is that one was offered the program and the other was not. Any differences in outcomes between these two groups can thus be attributed directly to the program.

Massachusetts Institute of Technology