



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

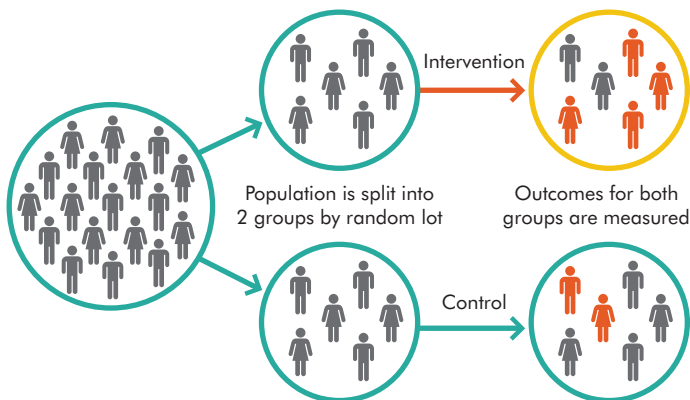
We work with social service providers, nonprofits, industry and government leaders, and academic researchers to evaluate programs or policies aimed at addressing the changing nature of work in North America. While we are open to any proposal focused broadly on these aims, we are particularly excited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



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.

PARTNERSHIP SPOTLIGHT

Can tailored information impact low-income workers' job transitions, employment, and earnings?

In our initiative's first funded project, J-PAL invited researchers Alex Bartik and Bryan Stuart are partnering with MichiganWorks! Southwest, a nonprofit that administers employment services to low-income workers in southwest Michigan, to understand the impact of one of their programs.

This partnership will evaluate the impact of a website/smart-phone based program that provides low-income workers with tailored information about job opportunities with higher wages and faster employment. The evaluation will analyze whether this intervention can increase workers' employment and earnings over a three month period.

"The W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research and Michigan Works! Southwest have a history of trying new and innovative approaches to better serve our customers. We're hoping this experiment will provide us with useful information that can be shared with other organizations to best serve unemployed, low-income individuals."



BEN DAMEROW

– Ben Damerow, Director of Michigan Works!

"Partnering with Michigan Works! Southwest provides a terrific opportunity to study how an innovative service affects job seekers' opportunities. We've learned from their years of experience and are excited to work with them to produce relevant insights into their operations and the labor market in general."



ALEX BARTIK



BRYAN STUART

– Alex Bartik and Bryan Stuart, J-PAL affiliated researchers

ABOUT J-PAL NORTH AMERICA

The Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL), a global research center based at MIT, has over a decade of experience using randomized evaluations to produce clear and compelling evidence about which anti-poverty programs and policies work. J-PAL North America, a regional office of J-PAL, was founded in 2013 and has successfully launched research initiatives in health care delivery, state and local government innovation, education technology, and work of the future.

J-PAL North America's staff and network of over 150 affiliated researchers bring expertise in building decision-makers' understanding of the importance of rigorous evaluation, identifying opportunities to feasibly embed evaluations into the rollout of programs and policies, and synthesizing and disseminating evidence to maximize policy impact and improve lives.