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NORTH AMERICA
MONTHLY NEWSLETTER
September 2023

Good afternoon,

This month, we're celebrating ten years of improving lives with rigorous evidence at J-PAL North America. As I (Vincent) reflect on this milestone for our organization, I am reminded of how evidence-based programs helped my family get to where we are today and achieve the "American dream."

My dad immigrated from Hong Kong to San Francisco as a teenager in the 1950s. When he first arrived, he lived in public housing in San Francisco's Chinatown. He struggled in school, reading far below grade level. But my dad knew he was incredibly bright and fortunately, a few others did too. He had a dedicated teacher who tutored him daily in English, teaching him the foundations of reading and writing and helping him with his accent so he could speak confidently in English. In his late twenties, my dad was fortunate enough to land at a company with a robust job training program that helped him develop technical skills such as financial planning and important soft skills such as professional communication. With that training, my dad built a meaningful and prosperous forty-year career, which in turn enabled his family to succeed.

My dad was an incredibly hard worker, but he also benefited from effective programs that we now know are backed by rigorous evidence. Randomized evaluations have found that high-dosage tutoring is a consistently effective strategy to help students do better in school and that sectoral employment job training programs effectively support low-income workers obtain higher-paying jobs. My dad was a prime example of how strong evidence-based programs can transform lives across generations. It is this history that motivates my work today to improve lives through rigorous research.

Last week, we gathered with our network of partners, funders, researchers, and staff from across North America to celebrate a decade of impact in evidence-based policymaking. We are proud to have reached over 35 million people in North America through the scale-up of evidence-based programs evaluated by J-PAL affiliated researchers. Celebrating this anniversary has allowed us to reflect on our first ten years of J-PAL North America in several ways—many of which are featured in this newsletter—and begin creating a roadmap for what the next ten will hold.

We will continue to focus on generating policy-relevant evidence through randomized evaluations, but we aim to do this at a deeper level and on a more significant scale. In our

next decade, we envision launching hundreds of new randomized evaluations, shifting the paradigm of what can be studied with randomized evaluations, and supporting the scale-up of a new generation of evidence-based programs. We aim to partner with governments at all levels to institutionalize a culture of evidence-based policymaking that goes beyond individual studies.

J-PAL North America has a bright future, thanks in large part to the incredible partners who make our work possible and help further our mission to advance evidence-based policymaking in North America. We hope you will join us in our continued effort to improve lives with rigorous evidence.

Vincent Quan & Laura Feeney
Co-Executive Directors, J-PAL North America

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Reflecting on a decade of impactful research at J-PAL North America

This month, we launched the J-PAL North America impact webpage and a five-part blog series sharing stories and key lessons from our first decade. On the blog, we feature landmark studies we have supported, insights from several J-PAL affiliated professors, and lessons learned in the project lifecycle such as ensuring rigorous research design and effective implementation and influencing policy at scale. On our impact webpage, we share a decade of progress by the numbers: the growth of our researcher and partner networks, dollars shifted towards evidence-based programs, and randomized evaluations funded and conducted. Explore the blog series >>

Laura Arnold and Esther Duflo speak at the J-PAL North America 10-Year Convening

Recap: J-PAL North America 10-Year Anniversary Convening

Last week over our two-day convening, we gathered with our network of researchers, program implementers, funders, policymakers, and staff to celebrate ten years of J-PAL North America. We showcased research insights across several policy areas and facilitated important conversations on the opportunities and challenges of evidence-based policymaking. Highlights included a policy dialogue between Nobel Laureate Esther Duflo (J-PAL co-founder and co-director) and Laura Arnold (co-founder and co-chair of Arnold Ventures), a panel discussion about advancing racial equity with rigorous research, and a keynote speech from Kim Janey, former mayor of Boston and current CEO of EMPath. Visit our event website to learn about our vision for the next decade and stay tuned for recordings from our two-day event.

Gustavo Bobonis and Carrie Cihak at the J-PAL North America 10-Year Convening

Recognizing J-PAL North America's inaugural Evidence Champions

In a new blog and video series, J-PAL North America is recognizing individuals in our network who have made extraordinary contributions to the field of evidence-based policymaking. This year, we honored two inaugural Evidence Champions, Gustavo J. Bobonis, as our researcher recipient, and Carrie Cihak, as our practitioner recipient. Read more on the J-PAL blog about Gustavo's work with the Puerto Rican government to build a culture of evidence generation and use and Carrie's feature on centering community perspectives, promoting continual learning, and bringing proven solutions to scale in King County, Washington.

FEATURED EVALUATION SUMMARIES

Ten years of key studies

Over the past ten years, J-PAL North America has supported more than 165 randomized evaluations across a range of key social policy areas. In celebration of our tenth anniversary, we're featuring some of the most impactful bodies of research our research network has contributed to. Learn more about these studies and their roles in shifting policy >>

FEATURED RESEARCH RESOURCE

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Designing intake and consent processes

Complex relationships between patients and providers, where patients are in potentially vulnerable positions while receiving or seeking care, create additional challenges to intake procedures and informed consent in the health care context. This resource uses two case studies to provide guidance for designing intake and consent processes that maximize statistical power, avoid bias, minimize health care disruption, and support enrollment staff while asking patients for consent.

This resource is part of our "Health Care Evaluation Toolkit," supported by the MIT Roybal Center and the National Institute on Aging of the National Institutes of Health.

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Have an idea of content you would like to see in this newsletter? We want to hear from you! Please send your feedback to J-PAL North America Policy and Communications Manager, Erin Graeber.

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