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Subject: Announcing Year 2 of the Low-Cost RCT Competition: Building Evidence To Drive Effective Social Spending

We're pleased to announce the launch of year 2 of the Coalition for Evidence-Based Policy's three-year competition to select and fund low-cost randomized controlled trials (RCTs) designed to build policy-important evidence about "what works" in U.S. social spending. Full information on the competition, including the Application Packet, can be accessed through the [competition webpage](#). A one-page overview, excerpted from the webpage, is shown below.

We had an excellent response in year 1 of the competition, resulting in the award of three particularly strong RCT projects – described below and discussed at a recent low-cost RCT [conference](#) co-sponsored by the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy and our organization.

We're looking forward to this next round of the competition, and encourage you to participate and/or to share this announcement with colleagues who may be interested.

Thanks,
Jon

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Demonstrating How Low-Cost Randomized Controlled Trials Can Drive Effective Social Spending

In response to the White House and Office of Management and Budget (OMB) [call to action](#) for evidence-based reforms across the federal government, the [Coalition for Evidence-Based Policy](#) has launched a competition to select and fund low-cost randomized controlled trials (RCTs) that seek to build actionable evidence about "what works" in U.S. social spending. This is designed as a high-visibility, three-year initiative, whose purpose is to demonstrate the feasibility and value of low-cost RCTs to a wide policy and philanthropic audience.

Linked below is the application packet for the competition's second year (2015), in which we will select and fund 3-4 low-cost RCTs. The awardees in the competition's first year (2014) illustrate the type of studies we seek to fund:

- [A large, multi-site RCT of Bottom Line](#), a program that provides one-on-one guidance to help low-income, first-generation students get into and graduate from college. This study is measuring college enrollment, persistence, and completion outcomes for a sample of nearly 1,400 students over a seven-year period, using

administrative data from the National Student Clearinghouse. The total study cost is \$159,000, of which we awarded \$100,000.

- [A large RCT of Durham Connects](#), a postnatal nurse home visiting program designed to improve child and mother health and well-being. The study is using hospital administrative records to measure program impacts on families' emergency department use and related healthcare costs through child age 24-months, for a sample of about 1,100 families in Durham County, North Carolina. The total study cost is \$183,000, of which we awarded \$96,000.
- [A large, multi-site RCT of workplace health and safety inspections](#) carried out by the federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). For a sample of about 29,000 business establishments eligible for a randomized inspection, the study is testing whether being randomly chosen for inspection affects establishments' subsequent injury rates and business outcomes (e.g., sales, business closures) over a multi-year period – all measured through administrative data from OSHA and other sources. The total study cost is \$153,000, of which we awarded \$96,000.

These and other examples were discussed at a July 2014 conference on low-cost RCTs, co-sponsored by the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) and our organization (see our [overview](#), and White House OSTP [summary](#)). The conference is one of several recent Executive Branch efforts to advance low-cost, rigorous evaluations, described in the *2014 Economic Report of the President* ([chapter 7](#)) and the FY 2015 budget ([chapter](#) on performance and management, pp. 65-70).

The Coalition is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that is unaffiliated with any social programs. This initiative is funded through philanthropic grants to the Coalition from the Laura and John Arnold Foundation, Annie E. Casey Foundation, and Overdeck Family Foundation.

[Download the Application Packet](#), which includes:

- **A brief concept paper on the initiative (three pages)** – *The Breakthrough: Low-cost RCTs are a recent innovation in policy research that can rapidly build the body of evidence about “what works” to address major social problems.*
- **The Request for Proposals (RFP), inviting grant applications for the second of three annual competitions (three pages).** As described in the RFP, we are accepting letters of interest from prospective applicants through February 13, 2015.