MIT Job Description

Job Title: Research Manager 6	**Position Title: Director of Policy and Communications**
Reports to: Executive Director	**% Effort or Wkly Hrs: 100%**
Department: Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab	**Date: 09/17/2026**

The Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL) is a global research center working to reduce poverty by ensuring that policy is informed by scientific evidence. Anchored by a network of over 390 affiliated professors at universities around the world, J-PAL conducts randomized impact evaluations to answer critical questions in the fight against poverty. Headquartered in the Economics Department at MIT, J-PAL has seven regional offices worldwide and staff based in almost a dozen countries. In 2019, the co-founders of the lab were awarded the Nobel Prize in economics for this path breaking work. J-PAL network research has informed scale-ups of programs and policies that have reached over 850 million people around the world since 2003. Our host university MIT, itself is world-renowned for both its education and cutting-edge research. MIT welcomes people from all walks of life to bring their talent, ideas, and experience to our community. What is less well known is that MIT is also ranked among the best places to work.

Position Overview:

J-PAL is recruiting for an outstanding senior leader to direct its Policy & Communications Group. The Director of Policy and Communications is a senior-level position based at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge, MA. The Policy & Communications Group plays a key role in translating research by J-PAL affiliates into actionable poverty alleviation policies around the world. Staff connect the dots between economics and policy and are passionate about working with organizations to form partnerships for evidence-informed development policy.

Reporting to J-PAL's Executive Director, the Director of Policy and Communications manages planning and strategy development to further J-PAL's core mission of impacting policy by promoting evidence-based decision-making. The Director of Policy and Communications works closely with other Directors of Research, Education and Training, Finance and Operations, and Evidence to Scale along with the Executive Director, to guide J-PAL's strategy and operations worldwide.

Principal Duties and Responsibilities

Policy leadership, strategy, and planning duties worldwide (50%):

- **Planning:** Develop and oversee implementation of multi-year policy and communications strategies for J-PAL Global and advise all seven regional offices from inception to completion, collaborating with regional partner offices to develop activities to have significant policy impact; prioritize among activities based on funding available and staff capabilities.
- **Evidence summary and synthesis:** Direct J-PAL's eleven sector teams in summarizing and synthesizing evidence through multiple products – spanning evaluation summaries, to policy insights, to new "big ideas" campaign
- **Policy Outreach**: Travel to meet and build relationships with key senior partners in governments, NGOs, foundations, and multilateral aid agencies. Primary spokesperson representing the entire J-PAL family on what J-PAL is and does, presenting strategy and results from J-PAL's field research, building collaborations with J-PAL spanning policy, research, and training.
- **Support partners in using evidence**: Lead J-PAL's efforts to collaborate with governments, multilateral aid agencies, and non-profits to understand global evidence and how to use it to inform decision-making in their institutions and contexts. This requires working with J-PAL regional offices, affiliates, and a host of partners. Participate in global communities of practice on evidence-based policymaking.
- **Oversee Initiative teams**: Provide overall guidance to over ten multi-million-dollar J-PAL research and policy regranting Initiatives, overseeing 30 staff to meet research and policy objectives. Lead efforts to develop new initiatives with coherent research and outreach strategies to present to potential funders.
- **Oversee Cost Effectiveness Analysis**: Building on current J-PAL practices, oversee efforts to make cost-effectiveness analytical techniques more robust and reliable; collaborate with research management to improve cost-collection systems on projects.

Management and Development Duties (50%)

- **Supervision of Policy Group**: Provide overall direct management of the 40-person Policy Group at J-PAL Global in the following functions: supervise performance management, supervise hiring, review, and personnel development activities, identifying needs for the team as a whole as well as individual team members; lead the development of staff from Associate, Senior Associate, Manager, Senior Manager, Lead, to Associate Director levels. Directly manage 4-6 Associate Director and Lead level staff. Provide coaching on personnel management in conjunction with HR personnel. Additionally, this position is responsible for advising regional policy leadership managing 70+ policy staff in 12 countries and in senior level recruitment and high-level supervision of their work.

- **Manage communications team**: Provide guidance and management to 5 communications specialists at J-PAL/MIT – spanning media, design, and digital communications (website and video), and strategic stakeholders, including affiliates, alumni, donors, and partners.
- **Evaluate the impact of policy efforts:** For internal improvement and donor reporting, collaborate with senior management to develop and track indicators on the impact of our work.
- **Budgeting:** Working with finance staff, participating in annual budgeting exercises, and managing expenditures throughout the year.
- **Fundraising:** Member of principal fundraising team for J-PAL worldwide to ensure the financial health and support the growth of our MIT endowment, including responsible for identifying and targeting donors for new funding opportunities securing major gifts for J-PAL, grant writing, management of critical donor relationships, and board stewardship.

Miscellaneous: Any other tasks assigned by the Executive Director

Supervision Received:

The Director of Policy and Communications works largely independently but reports directly to J-PAL's Executive Director. He/she works collaboratively with J-PAL's academic Directors on broad strategy and activities related to policy impact. He/she takes ownership of tasks and exercises good judgment in knowing when to seek feedback from the Directors and/or Executive Director, and shows initiative in adding value to processes. The Director of Policy is expected to work independently and manage groups and provide senior-level leadership.

Supervision Exercised:

Supervision of all Policy and Communications staff (Associate Director, Leads, Senior Managers, Managers, Senior Associates, and Associates).

Qualifications & Skills:

- The candidate should ideally have a background in both international development policy and economics to effectively translate the academic research in development economics to policy lessons. This can be through university degrees and/or work experience.
- The Director of Policy will have a master's or Ph.D. in economics or in Public Policy with a concentration in economics or development. A dual degree in both economics and public policy will be a plus.
- 15+ years of work experience in the field(s) of public policy, international development, and economics with demonstrated experience leading high performing teams.
- Experience working in one or more of the developing countries where J-PAL affiliates have field studies will be a plus.

- Demonstrated strong ability to interact with very high-level contacts in public policy, for example, contact with senior functionaries in developing country governments, NGOs, foundations, and multilateral aid agencies.

Compensation Compensation: Please note that salaries for most new employees are set at the starting point / lower end of this range. -

Pay Range Minimum: $239,223

Pay Range Maximum: $271,844

Important Note: Applications that do not include a cover letter will not be considered.