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Attracting Good People into Public Service:
Evidence from a Field Experiment in the Philippines*

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Abstract

This paper evaluates a policy intervention designed to attract good political candidates – competent and honest ones – to public service. Inspired by the idea that schooling can act as a screening mechanism, and that non-monetary status awards can be a cost-effective tool to incentivize individuals, we evaluate whether a leadership training workshop with performance-based awards can screen and incentivize good people to serve in public office. In the context of a randomized field experiment among aspirants for the village youth councils in the Philippines, we find that this policy intervention is effective in terms of attracting individuals with above-median measures of public service motivation, intellectual ability, integrity, and aspiration.

Keywords: political selection, public service motivation, incentives, screening, leadership training workshop, political elite behavior

JEL Code: H11

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1

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