MIT Economics

IAN SAPOLLNIK

OFFICE CONTACT INFORMATION
MIT Department of Economics
77 Massachusetts Avenue, E52-301
Cambridge, MA 02139
ian_s@mit.edu
isapollnik.github.io

HOME CONTACT INFORMATION
Ian Sapollnik
15R Lee St Apt T1
Cambridge, MA 02139
Mobile: 609-250-8700

MIT PLACEMENT OFFICER
Professor Stephen Morris
semorris@mit.edu
617-253-5193

MIT PLACEMENT ADMINISTRATOR
Mrs. Shannon Robinson
shmay@mit.edu
617-324-5857

DOCTORAL STUDIES

Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT)
PhD, Economics, Expected completion June 2027
DISSERTATION: "Essays in Public Finance"

DISSERTATION COMMITTEE AND REFERENCES

Professor Jim Poterba
MIT Department of Economics
77 Massachusetts Avenue, E52-444
Cambridge, MA 02139
617-253-6673
poterba@mit.edu

Professor Nathan Hendren
MIT Department of Economics
77 Massachusetts Avenue, E52-438
Cambridge, MA 02139
773-344-8990
nhendren@mit.edu

Professor Antoinette Schoar
MIT Sloan School of Management
77 Massachusetts Avenue, E62-638
Cambridge, MA 02139
617-253-3763
aschoar@mit.edu

PRIOR EDUCATION

The University of British Columbia — 2019
Bachelor of Arts, Honours in Economics

CITIZENSHIP Canada, Argentina **GENDER** Male

LANGUAGES English (native), Spanish (native), French (proficient)

FIELDS Primary Fields: Public Finance, Corporate Finance

Secondary Fields: Entrepreneurship, Household Finance

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

14.471 PhD Public Finance I — 2023
Teaching Assistant to Professors Jim Poterba and Iván Werning

14.32/14.320 Undergraduate/Masters Econometrics — 2023–2026
Teaching Assistant to Professor Anna Mikusheva

RELEVANT POSITIONS	RA to Professor Jonathan Parker, MIT Sloan	2022
	RA to Professor Atif Mian, Princeton	2019–2021
	Student Analyst, Department of Finance Canada	2018
FELLOWSHIPS, HONORS, AND AWARDS	George and Obie Shultz Fund Grant, MIT	2022, 2023, 2025
	Doctoral Fellowship, SSHRC	2021–2025
	C. Lowell Harriss Dissertation Fellowship, Lincoln Institute	2022
	Best Undergraduate Research Paper, Canadian Economics Association	2019
	Joseph A. Crumb Prize in Economics, UBC	2019

PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

Presentations: Canadian Public Economics Group (scheduled), NBER Economic Analysis of Business Taxation (scheduled), MIT Public/Labor Seminar, Canadian Economics Association, MIT Applied Micro Lunch, MIT Public Finance Lunch

PUBLICATIONS

"Tax Policy and Business Entry," ***Journal of Public Economics*** **Vol. 252 (Dec 2025): 105537**, *with Dustin Swonder*

This paper measures the effects of state corporate and personal income tax reforms on business entry using an event study research design. We focus on reforms that do not coincide with federal tax changes, are preceded and followed by stable tax policy, and substantially change tax burdens. Corporate tax reforms cause meaningful changes in business entry: we measure a five-year elasticity of 2.7 with respect to the net-of-tax rate. This is driven primarily by large effects of tax cuts. Corporate tax cuts also reduce the predicted growth potential of entrants. We do not find strong evidence of cross-border spillovers, and find no evidence that personal income tax reforms affect business entry.

RESEARCH PAPERS

"Crisis Relief Through the Tax Code: Effects of Corporate Loss Refunds on Firms and Workers" (Job Market Paper), *with Dustin Swonder*

Abstract

Governments undertake large expenditures to keep firms alive and workers employed during crises. However, directing that support to viable but financially constrained firms is often difficult. This paper asks whether tax loss carrybacks, which refund past taxes to loss-making firms, can reach productive firms and preserve jobs at low net cost to the government. We study Australia's 2020 carryback using the universe of business tax returns linked to monthly payroll records. Eligible firms were more likely than other loss-making firms to return to profitability; among them, more financially constrained firms were more likely to claim. Comparing corporations to similar pass-through businesses, which were ineligible, we find that the average potential refund reduced closures within two years by 0.25 percentage points, about 4 percent of the closures that would otherwise have occurred. Each dollar of potential refund raised payroll by 77 cents over sixteen months, mainly by retaining existing workers. Following workers across employers, we estimate that 35 percent of this, or 27 cents per dollar of potential refund, is earnings workers would otherwise have lost. Moreover, the government recovers much of what it pays out: 52 percent of the losses eligible for refunds

would otherwise have been deducted against profits within seven years. Constructing a marginal value of public funds, we find that carryback refunds delivered 2.26 dollars of value per dollar of net government spending, with the benefits mainly stemming from workers' preserved earnings. Together, our results indicate that refunding past taxes is an effective form of crisis relief: firms' tax histories direct support to viable firms, while much of the original outlay eventually returns to the government.

"Shared Appreciation Loans for Homebuyers: Evidence from a California Lottery", *with Dustin Swonder*

Most American renters would prefer to be homeowners and report that liquidity constraints prevent them from buying homes. We study a California state government program offering large down payment assistance loans to certain prospective first-time buyers. The loans charge a share of future home price appreciation and do not add to monthly costs. Leveraging conditional random assignment, we find that an offer more than doubles homeownership, and the effect persists a year after the utilization deadline. We estimate a model of non-financial preferences for homeownership, down payment capacity, and program hassle costs that rationalizes our reduced-form results. Participants value the loans primarily because they alleviate liquidity constraints that bind when meeting mortgage obligations, not because they subsidize housing consumption or help bypass minimum down payment requirements. Average willingness to pay for the California down payment assistance greatly exceeds expected fiscal cost, with a higher marginal value of public funds (MVPF) than housing voucher programs. Our MVPF estimate reflects high valuations among participants who would have bought with the smallest allowed down payment, as well as the program's recovery of most of its outlays through principal repayment and appreciation revenue.

RESEARCH IN PROGRESS

"The Emergence of Silicon Valleys: A Role for Government", *with Ofer Eldar and Adair Morse*

Can government support create entrepreneurial ecosystems rather than merely subsidize firms? We study the U.S. Small Business Investment Company (SBIC) program, which since 1958 has licensed privately managed investment funds and expanded their capacity with SBA-guaranteed leverage. Using a new historical registry linked to venture deals, exits, patents, patent-linked labor demand, and local Census outcomes, we uncover a mechanism through which government support for financial intermediaries creates spillover location effects. SBIC venture investments are followed by investor entry and return, startup entry, more new companies with patents, stronger patent-linked labor demand, and later non-SBIC investment by the same fund families. Financing rises first and exits later, consistent with entrepreneurial hub formation. The evidence suggests that government support can facilitate a VC ecosystem by building private intermediation capacity.

MISCELLANEOUS	MIT Economics Mental Health and Peer Support Group	2022–2025
	Volunteer Bike Mechanic, MIT Bike Lab	2024–