

Directed Research Projects on Canadian Economic Policy for 4th Year Students in Economics

Project title:

Online delivery of government programs

Manager/Supervisor:

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Name/address of organization:

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Description of organization:

The Social Research and Demonstration Corporation (SRDC) was established in December 1991 at the request of Human Resources and Development Canada (HRDC) – now Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) – to develop and implement a long-term, multi-site demonstration – the Self-Sufficiency Project. Since then, SRDC has completed over 100 projects and studies for various federal and provincial departments, municipalities, as well as other public and non-profit organizations.

SRDC is a non-profit research organization, with offices in Ottawa, Toronto, and Vancouver, created specifically to develop, field test, and rigorously evaluate government programs. SRDC's two-part mission is to help policy-makers and practitioners identify policies and programs that improve the well-being of all Canadians, with a special concern for the effects on the disadvantaged, and to raise the standards of evidence that are used in assessing policies.

SRDC accomplishes its mission by evaluating existing programs, and by testing new program ideas at scale and in multiple locations before they become policy and are implemented on a broader basis. Through the development and evaluation of demonstration projects and field experiments conducted in real-life contexts, SRDC brings together the worlds of academic researchers, government policy-makers, and on-the-ground program operators.

Project description:

This project would provide an environmental scan and literature review of government programs delivered through Internet, with a focus on online delivery of financial education.

Governments are increasingly turning to Internet to make various tools and resources available to as many people as possible. Online delivery of government programs is viewed as a low cost method to implement some traditionally high cost government procedures such as application to social security and job search assistance. New Web-based technologies offer ways of delivering information and specialized services that are less costly than more traditional methods by leveraging means of communication such as email, text chat, and videoconference technologies. Social networking tools may be incorporated to facilitate mentoring and peer interaction to provide greater support to those who need assistance in making better-informed decision, whether it is in relation to financial planning

The objectives of this project are to document existing online programs by governments, identify any evidence of their effectiveness and other policy issues related to online government program delivery.

Benefit to the student:

Most online government programs have not been subjected to rigorous examination. The student conducting the environmental scan and literature review will gain substantial understanding of this new development in government programs. The student will benefit from the guidance of SRDC researchers with considerable experience in the field through their involvement in the CareerMotion research project, which provides a series of important insights and lessons on how Web-based labour market services and information can help younger workers make sense of available information and apply it to their own career goals. Another recent SRDC project build on the growing body of research on the state of financial capability in Canada and abroad to identify how Web-based tools may best be utilized to assist Canadians in making better use of information that is already available to them, with the ultimate goal of helping them make more effective financial decisions.

Tasks and deliverables:

- Search and document existing government programs (in Canada and other countries) that are delivered online, with a focus on financial education programs.
- Collect and review existing literature related to effectiveness of online delivery of government programs.

Qualifications required:

- Good knowledge of using Web-based technologies and general knowledge of government programs are required.
- Experience in literature review is an asset.
- Good knowledge of using Microsoft Excel to calculate and prepare tables/graphs.
- Although advanced econometrics is not a requirement, the student should feel comfortable to work with statistics.
- Interactions with the supervisor will be in mostly English but bilingualism is an asset.