

CANADIAN LABOUR MARKET AND SKILLS RESEARCHER NETWORK

CALL FOR PROPOSALS ON UNDERSTANDING INDIVIDUAL NUMERACY: HOW ARE WE DOING? DOES IT MATTER?

This is a Request for Proposals (RFP) for research studies related to individual numeracy. The Canadian Labour Market and Skills Researcher Network (CLSRN) is organizing a research team in response to the Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) RFP “Understanding Individual Numeracy: How Are We Doing? Does it Matter?” CLSRN is seeking researchers who wish to become members of this team. The co-ordinators of this research team are David Green (University of British Columbia) and Jane Friesen (Simon Fraser University).

CLSRN expects to support several research papers in this area. The full set of topics listed by HRSDC as being of interest is detailed at the back of this document. CLSRN is particularly interested in research that examines the determinants of adult numeracy skills, and the extent to which numeracy matters to a range of outcome measures, including training uptake, labour market participation, employment earnings and total income, financial literacy and social participation. Topics not specifically listed in this Call for Proposals that are highly complementary to these research themes are also encouraged.

Our goal is to construct a coherent research program in which the team members will interact through two workshops spread over the three year term of the funding. Thus, while the list of potential topics is long, we intend to select papers that can be grouped into a coherent program. The specific focus of the program will be determined by the areas of commonality among submitted proposals. To allow us to construct the program, the application process will proceed in **two stages**:

- 1) An initial one page statement of intent in which the researcher proposes the main outlines of a substantive research paper. This is due by **October 23, 2009**
- 2) Based on these initial proposals, we will identify a main theme for the program and will invite researchers whose proposals fit closely with that theme to submit a more expanded 3 to 4 page proposal. The expanded proposal will be due by **November 13, 2009**. We will notify researchers about their inclusion in CLSRN’s proposed research program by November 20.

Papers are to be of the quality of papers submitted to peer-reviewed, refereed journals and authors are encouraged to ultimately submit to such forums (with appropriate acknowledgement of the funding source). Research studies will generally provide new empirical evidence that supports evidence-based policy decision making. Qualitative studies and critical reviews of existing literature are also of interest. CLSRN is particularly interested in supporting the research of new researchers in this area. For established researchers, proposals that involve graduate students or recent graduates in a significant role are also encouraged. CLSRN is also interested organizing a multi-disciplinary research team.

For the purposes of research support, the final product of the research will be a peer-reviewed working paper. CLSRN will be organizing two workshops at which researchers will present their research. Copyright of the research paper remains with the author(s). The working paper will appear in the CLSRN Working Paper Series, may be posted on a HRSDC web site, and may be reported in the CLSRN Newsletter. Working papers are expected to be 20-40 pages in length, although they could be somewhat longer than this standard in order to provide sufficient detail on methods used, results obtained, and discussion of policy implications.

Proposal requirements

1) Initial Proposal

The initial proposal should be 1 page in length. Proposals and final working papers may be written in English or French. The proposal should include the following:

- a. A brief description of the proposed research project with brief reference to related literatures and a brief description of the conceptual/theoretical framework to be used in the research;
- b. A list of the proposed data sources and a brief discussion of the main research challenges and research methods;
- c. The anticipated total duration of the project;
- d. A list of the primary researchers involved in the project and their affiliations
- e. A total budget request and a brief breakdown of the allocation of that budget (e.g., to areas such as teaching release, travel, research assistant time, etc. – see the description under the Expanded Proposal, below)

Researchers must also submit a current copy of their CV with their proposal.

2) Expanded Proposal

The expanded proposal should still be brief (e.g. 3-4 pages in length) and can take the form of the proposed outline of the research paper. Proposals and final working papers may be written in English or French. The proposal should include the following:

- a. A brief description of the proposed research project contextualized within the existing literature and including the conceptual/theoretical framework to be used in the research;
- b. A description of, and rationale for, the data sources and research methods to be utilized as well as a discussion of potential challenges or research limitations;
- c. A discussion of how the data, methods and analysis proposed will address gender-based analysis;
- d. The anticipated total duration of the project;
- e. The names of the researcher(s), research assistants, etc. involved in the project with the activities to be carried out; proposals should demonstrate how the researcher(s) is/are qualified to carry out the various components of the proposed research;

- f. A breakdown of the level of effort by each research project member.

Researchers must also provide a budget with a brief justification of the budget (including a breakdown of all costs). The budget can be used by researchers to meet any legitimate expenses associated with carrying out the research. Such expenses can include: teaching or administrative release (at the relevant local university rates for such release); research assistance; data collection; honorarium for author(s); and travel associated with conducting the research. The maximum budget for a project involving a literature review would be \$15,000. The maximum budget for a project involving the analysis of secondary data would be \$25,000. For projects requiring primary data collection, additional costs may be allowed if justified. Travel associated with presenting the paper at workshops and conferences organized by CLSRN will be covered separately. Additional amounts are available to cover the costs of accessing data at a Statistics Canada Research Data Centre (RDC).

General Information

- If researchers plan to use data housed in an RDC, their proposal should (i) demonstrate need for access to confidential micro-data and (ii) the viability of the methods to be applied given the data to be analyzed.
- Government researchers are also invited to submit proposals, either as principal investigators or as co-investigators. However, government researchers are not eligible for financial support.
- Proposals must involve new research that is not supported by other organizations. However, the proposed research may be related to, or an extension of, research supported elsewhere.

Timelines – Proposals, deliverables, and payments

The Initial One-page Proposal is due by Friday, October 23, 2009. Researchers will be contacted within a week to let them know if they are invited to submit an expanded proposal. If they are, the Expanded Proposal is due by Friday, November 13, 2009. If CLSRN's application is successful, payments will be made upon submission of each deliverable as outlined below. The schedule is tentative and specific dates are to be determined.

October 23, 2009	Initial Proposals due
November 13, 2009	Expanded Proposals due (by invitation)
December 2009-January 2010	Notification of RFP results (15% of budget)
August 2010	Detailed outline (20% of budget)
December 2010	Progress report (10% of budget)
June 2011	Draft research report (25% of budget)
June 2012	Final research report (20% of budget)
June 2012	Presentation of research report (10% of budget)

Workshop dates will be announced at a later date.

Proposals should be sent to: Katherine Meredith
Canadian Labour Market and Skills Researcher Network
Department of Economics
University of British Columbia
#997 – 1873 East Mall
Vancouver, BC V6T 1Z1

Proposals can also be submitted by email to: clsrn@interchange.ubc.ca

Enquiries about this research project can be directed to:

Jane Friesen
Department of Economics
Simon Fraser University
friesen@sfu.ca

David Green
Department of Economics
University of British Columbia
green@econ.ubc.ca

To learn more about CLSRN, please visit www.clsrn.econ.ubc.ca.

Research Program – Topics and Requirements

HRSDC has identified a number of key knowledge gaps related to adult numeracy. CLSRN is interested in developing a coherent program of research related to the determinants and outcomes of adult numeracy. Specific questions identified by HRSDC that might be addressed within this program of research include:

Current state of numeracy:

- Are numeracy skills of Canadians adequate to meet the demands of the labour market?
- What is the relationship between numeracy and literacy skills in Canada?
- How do other countries define numeracy and is there a difference between numeracy at 'work' and numeracy outside 'work'?
- What are the various assessment tools available to measure numeracy competency of adults in Canada? Internationally?
- What can be learned from the policies in other countries?

Determinants of and barriers to numeracy and at-risk groups:

- How are numeracy skills maintained or lost over time? What activities help preserve and augment these skills among labour force participants (e.g., employed, unemployed, part-time, full-time, temporary/permanent)?
- How is the acquisition of numeracy related to the acquisition of the nine Essential Skills?(visit the following website:
http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/workplaceskills/essential_skills/general/home.shtml)
- Since numeracy cannot be fully separated from Document Literacy or Problem Solving, how can practitioners teach it to second-language learners?
- What do we know about adults with special education needs and numeracy development?
- Does literacy learning need to precede numeracy learning, or is it possible to teach both simultaneously and imbedded in one intervention?
- How is numeracy performance affected by factors such as gender, class, age, ethnicity, language, disability and environment?

Relationship between numeracy and individual outcomes:

- What is the relationship between numeracy and labour market outcomes? Do they vary across occupations and sectors?
- What is the relationship between numeracy and the development of other skills? For example, what links can be drawn between numeracy and financial literacy?
- What is the relationship between numeracy and PSE participation and completion, labour market outcomes, social inclusion and citizen engagement? Does it vary across immigrant groups?
- What impact, if any, does individual numeracy have on patterns of social participation?
- What is the distribution of outcomes of adults who have both low literacy and low numeracy competencies in relation to those who have only one of the two deficiencies? Among immigrant groups? Across occupations and sectors?

- In pursuing skills upgrading / retraining, to what extent do individuals focus on numeracy skills?
- What is the relationship between numeracy, employment, labour productivity, and economic growth?

Interventions

- What is the state of adult numeracy instruction in Canada and what type of instruction works?
- How do teacher training and professional development affect numeracy development?
- How do adults learn numeracy best?
- What is known about best practices for teaching numeracy to vulnerable groups such as the low-skilled and GED graduates, and should practices differ relative to specific populations?
- What types of supports do employers offer to assist employees in developing/furthering their numeracy skills?
- To what extent do employers understand numeracy development as a legitimate element of work-based training?
- How does numeracy affect natural economic growth?

Data sets that could be used to address these questions include the International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey, the Program for International Assessment of Student Achievement, the Youth in Transition Survey and the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth. Researchers are also encouraged to consider other sources and types of data, including primary data collection as appropriate.

Researchers are invited to propose research projects which fill these research gaps or address complementary research gaps not specifically identified above.

Gender-based analysis (GBA) – GBA means looking at the differences between women and men in both outcomes and determinants. Researchers shall identify, where possible, how the data, methods and analysis proposed will address GBA. Where the researcher does not believe GBA is possible, for example due to data limitations, an explanation should be provided.