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JOB DESCRIPTION

Research Coordinator (1757), Digital Financial Services
Computer Science & Engineering
University of Washington

As part of a Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF)-funded project in Digital Financial Services, the Department of Computer Science and Engineering at University of Washington is seeking a Research Coordinator. The Digital Financial Services (DFS) Research Group was formed to investigate technologies that will improve the ability of banks and mobile operators to deploy digital financial products that reach the poor. The research group is led by Professor Richard Anderson and includes Professors Yoshi Kohno, Franziska Roesner, and Kurtis Heimerl in Computer Science & Engineering.

The project aims to develop and deploy technological solutions to specific challenges that impede the introductions and wide scale deployment of these financial products. Low profitability, lack of client demand, and the outright failure of many DFS launches can be traced back to difficult barriers and frictions that hinder the business model and scalability of DFS systems. Challenges that have been identified include fraud and cyberattacks, network failures, the proximity payments user experience, managing identity and on-boarding, the lack of analytics for product development and risk scoring, agent management, and financial education for end users.

The Research Coordinator will support and coordinate with a group of four faculty, graduate and undergraduate students, a postdoctoral fellow, external visitors, and departmental fiscal staff. The group's activities will include assessing the usability and security of financial technologies, developing tools to support introduction of financial products, managing financial services data sets, and conducting technology assessments. The group will be producing a series of research reports in addition to developing prototype technologies for field deployment.

The Research Coordinator will be responsible for group coordination, managing external partnerships, supporting evaluation studies, creating a communication strategy, managing publications, and communications including grant- and report-writing. This position will not be responsible for financial tracking or budgets.

Reporting to Professor Richard Anderson, this position will be responsible for the following:

Research Group Coordination

- Provide overall coordination of the research team. Ensure effective and efficient team functioning.
- Manage team communication, provide regular study updates.
- Coordinate research team meetings to be held on a regular and as-needed basis including coordinating scheduling, creating and carrying out agendas, preparing meeting documents, and creating and maintaining related meeting documentation.

- Act as a change agent in developing and implementing process change within the research team.
- Prepare human subjects applications for product testing; responsible to ensure that the DFS research program is consistent with ethical standards and other regulations.
- Develop forms, questionnaires, and procedures for collecting and summarizing observations and data.

Communications

- Oversee the communications strategy for the group. Develop and implement goals, priorities, and approaches that will showcase the group's work and promote the results of the project to provide technological solutions for improving the deployment of digital financial products for the poor.
- Maintain the group's website, update content, write new content, and solicit submissions from others.
- Prepare research reports and progress reports. Write administrative reports for funding agencies, primarily for the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Assist in writing the annual report.
- Prepare presentations and manuscripts for peer-review publication.
- Play a major role in preparing grant applications and submissions, including literature review, drafting background and methodological content, budget justifications, draft of grant figures and tables, completion of grant submission forms, and copy editing.

External & Third-Party Relations

- Act as a liaison between the DFS group, program partners, research study sites, funding agencies, and other relevant administrative departments and agencies.
- Maintain communications with external partners.
- Track research of external researchers and organization that is relevant to the group's activities.

Requirements:

- Bachelor's degree in international development, economics, public policy, or related area AND at least two years of applicable experience.
- Excellent verbal and written communication skills; capable of producing high-quality written documents.
- Fluency in English
- Strong project management skills; demonstrated success managing multiple projects.

- Three months' experience working on a global development project while living in a developing country.
- Ability to effectively bridge communication between technical research staff at UW, funding staff at Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and third parties.
- Computer proficiency with intermediate skills or higher in MS Word, Excel, Outlook, PowerPoint, and Google docs.

Desired

- Master's degree in international development, economics, public policy, or related area.
- Project experience with mobile banking or microfinance.

Conditions:

The position may involve international travel, possibly one or two international trips per year.