INTERNATIONAL CENTER FOR RESPONSIBLE GAMING

Advancing Research, Education and Awareness

2026 SEED GRANT

REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH ON GAMBLING DISORDER AND RESPONSIBLE GAMBLING

Up to $40,000 in direct costs ($50,000 total with indirects)
Application Deadline: June 5, 2026
The ICRG anticipates awarding two grants.

The International Center for Responsible Gaming (ICRG) offers Seed Grants in support of a variety of research activities, exploring the etiology, prevention and treatment of gambling disorder, and the development and evaluation of responsible gambling strategies, such as:

- pilot and feasibility studies to support the development of larger-scale research on gambling behavior, harm, and responsible gambling interventions
- secondary analysis of existing datasets to generate new insights into gambling risk, protective factors, and responsible gambling outcomes
- small, self-contained research projects focused on advancing knowledge of gambling disorder or responsible gambling strategies
- development and validation of research methodologies for studying gambling behavior, risk, and intervention effectiveness
- development and testing of new research tools, technologies, or measurement approaches to improve the study of gambling and responsible gambling

Seed Grants are intended to support early-stage research that can generate preliminary data, test novel ideas, or position investigators for larger external funding.

Available Funding

Applicants may request up to $40,000 for one year in (direct costs) plus 25 percent of direct costs in Facilities & Administration or indirect costs, not to exceed $50,000 total.

The International Center for Responsible Gaming

The International Center for Responsible Gaming (ICRG) is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization that has supported rigorous, peer-reviewed scientific research on gambling disorder and responsible gambling since 1996. The ICRG is recognized globally as a leader in funding high-quality research that informs prevention, treatment, and policy.

The ICRG awards grants on a competitive basis under the leadership of the Scientific Advisory Board. Composed of leading independent scientists with expertise in addiction and related topics, the Scientific Advisory Board plays a vital role by ensuring the ICRG follows rigorous standards in awarding grants for only the highest quality research proposals. The current roster of members is listed on page 9.

Eligible Applicants

Domestic or international, public or private, non-profit or for-profit organizations are eligible to apply for ICRG funding. The Principal Investigator (PI) must have a PhD, MD or other comparable terminal degree. Investigators who are not active PIs or Co-PIs on existing ICRG grants are strongly encouraged to apply. ICRG also encourages early career investigators to apply.

The SAB will consider previous performance on ICRG-funded projects as well as the overall concentration of funding held by a lab, institution, or investigator network before awarding the grant. A group may include shared laboratories, overlapping personnel, or recurring co-investigator teams. Applicants whose group currently holds ICRG funding exceeding $400,000 are encouraged to contact Travis Sztainert, Director of Research and Education, to confirm eligibility before applying.

Review Process and Criteria

The ICRG seeks proposals of high scientific merit that contribute to the field from investigators who show promise of disseminating their work at high-impact conferences and in peer-reviewed scientific journals.

An appropriate scientific review group convened in accordance with the standard ICRG peer review procedures, modeled on those of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), will evaluate applications for scientific and technical merit.

As part of the initial merit review, all applications:

- May undergo a selection process in which only those applications deemed to have the highest scientific merit, generally the top half of applications under review, will be discussed and assigned a priority score.
- Will receive a written critique in the Summary Statement.
- Will receive a second level of review by the Scientific Advisory Board, which makes the final funding decisions.

The peer review panel will evaluate proposals according to the following criteria, adapted from the NIH:

1. **Importance of the Research**. Does the project address a critical problem or significant barrier in the field? Will successful completion of the project substantially advance scientific knowledge, clinical practices, methodologies, or preventive interventions? Does the proposal use innovative concepts or approaches, or improve and refine existing methodologies?
2. **Rigor and Feasibility:** Is the overall strategy, methodology, and analysis clearly justified and likely to yield robust, reproducible results? Are potential problems and alternative strategies clearly addressed? For clinical research, are human subject protections justified and appropriate?
3. **Expertise and Resources:** Are the investigators well-qualified, with complementary expertise and clear leadership roles? Does the environment, including institutional support, resources, equipment, and collaborative arrangements, enhance the likelihood of successful project completion?

Additional Review Criteria

In addition to the above criteria, the following items will be considered in the determination of scientific merit and the priority score:

• **Protection of Human Subjects from Research Risk**: The involvement of human subjects and protections from research risk relating to their participation in the proposed research will be assessed.

• **Care and Use of Vertebrate Animals in Research**: If live vertebrate animals are to be used, the following five points should be addressed in the application:

1. Provide a detailed description of the proposed use of the animals in the work outlined in the Research Strategy section. Identify the species, strains, ages, sex and number of animals to be used in the proposed work.
2. Justify the use of animals, the choice of species, and the numbers to be used. If animals are in short supply, costly, or to be used in large numbers, provide an additional rationale for their selection and numbers.
3. Provide information on the veterinary care of the animals involved.
4. Describe the procedures for ensuring that discomfort, distress, pain and injury will be limited to that which is unavoidable in the conduct of scientifically sound research. Describe the use of analgesic, anesthetic, and tranquilizing drugs and/or comfortable restraining devices, where appropriate, to minimize discomfort, distress, pain, and injury.
5. Describe any method of euthanasia to be used and the reasons for its selection. State whether this method is consistent with the recommendations of the AVMA

Guidelines for the Euthanasia of Animals. If not, include a scientific justification for not following the recommendations.

• **Biohazards:** If materials or procedures are proposed that are potentially hazardous to research personnel and/or the environment, determine if the proposed protection is adequate.

• **Budget:** The reasonableness of the proposed budget and the requested period of support in relation to the proposed research plan.

Applicants must use the application form provided on the ICRG website (www.icrg.org). Enter text in the shaded areas on the form. The document will automatically convert the text into Arial font.

Face Page (1 page)

The *Principal Investigator* (PI) is the person responsible for the scientific and technical direction of the project and is the primary contact for the ICRG. Provide full name, degree(s), title, department, institution, mailing address, telephone number, and e-mail address.

Date of Proposed Period of Support. Projects may begin August 1, 2026 and conclude no later than within one year.

Funds Requested. Requests may not exceed $40,000 in direct costs. An additional 25 percent of direct costs may be requested for the Facilities & Administration or indirect rate.

Applicant Organization. The Applicant Organization is legally and financially responsible for the conduct of activities supported by the award. Provide the name and contact information of the Applicant Organization’s Administrative Contact.

Regulatory Approvals. Please check the appropriate box to indicate the use of animals (IACUC) or human subjects (IRB) in the proposed project. Note that the PI must provide a copy of the IACUC and/or IRB letter to the ICRG before award funds will be released. Pending approvals at the time of application submission are acceptable.

Certifications. Provide the electronic signatures of the Principal Investigator and the Official Signing for the Organization by typing the names in the shaded box and checking the “Confirm Signature” box.

Page Two: Project Summary/Abstract; Senior/Key Personnel; Previous Support (1 page)

Insert text in the shaded areas on the form provided.

Project Summary/Abstract. Provide a succinct and accurate description of the proposed work suitable for dissemination to the public. State the application's broad, long-term objectives and specific aims. Describe concisely the research design and methods for achieving the stated goals.

Senior/Key Personnel. In addition to the Principal Investigator, Senior/Key Personnel are defined as individuals who contribute to the scientific development or execution of the project in a substantive, measurable way, whether or not salaries are requested. In addition, stakeholders should be included under Key Personnel. Stakeholders are defined as individuals affected by the proposed research project. For example, a stakeholder might be a treatment provider involved in a clinical trial. List the Principal Investigator, last name first. Then list all other Senior/Key Personnel in alphabetical order, last name first. For each individual, provide name, institutional affiliation and role on the project.

Previous Support from the ICRG/NCRG. Please list the title of any grant awards to the Principal Investigator from the International Center for Responsible Gaming, the National Center for Responsible Gaming, the Institute for Research on Pathological Gambling and Related Disorders and/or the Institute for Research on Gambling Disorders. Identify products resulting from the grant(s), such as publication in a peer-reviewed journal, a poster or presentation at a conference, or subsequent support from other funding entities to continue the development of the research project.

Biographical Sketch (maximum of five pages)

Provide a biographical sketch for the principal investigator and senior/key personnel. Use the NIH form or download from www.icrg.org. Each biographical sketch should not exceed five pages.

Research Plan (4 pages)

Enter text into the shaded areas.

1. *Specific Aims*. State concisely the hypothesis to be tested and the specific aim(s) to be achieved during the grant period. The review panel will consider whether the aims are reasonable to achieve during the one-year period and if successful completion of the aims will improve scientific knowledge, technical capability and/or clinical practice.
2. *Background and Significance*. State the significance of the proposed project to the field. Applicants should briefly describe the potential implications of findings for policy, practice, or future research. The review panel will ask: Does the project address an important problem or critical barrier to progress in the field? Does the application challenge and seek to shift current research or clinical practice paradigms by utilizing theoretical concepts, approaches or methodologies, instrumentation or interventions that are novel to one field of research or novel in the broad sense?
3. *Research Design and Methods.* Concisely present your experimental design and the methods to be used to accomplish your specific aims. Also, indicate how the results will be interpreted and how they will lead to future investigations. A data

sharing plan or rationale for not sharing data is encouraged. The review panel will ask: Are the overall strategy, methodology and analyses well-reasoned and appropriate to accomplish the specific aims of the project?

Human Subjects and Vertebrate Animals (2 pages)

Enter text into the shaded areas of the application form.

Protection of Human Subjects

If applicable, summarize your plan to protect human subjects according to the following outline:

1) Risks to Human Subjects

a) Human Subjects' Involvement and Characteristics

- Describe the proposed involvement of human subjects in the work outlined in the Research Plan section.
- Describe the characteristics of the subject population, including their anticipated number, age range and health status.
- Identify the criteria for inclusion or exclusion of any subpopulation.
- Explain the rationale for the involvement of special classes of subjects, such as fetuses, neonates, pregnant women, children, prisoners, institutionalized individuals or others who may be considered vulnerable populations. Note that "prisoners" includes all subjects involuntarily incarcerated (for example, in detention centers) as well as subjects who become incarcerated after the study begins.
- List any collaborating sites where human subjects research will be performed and describe the role of those sites and collaborating investigators in performing the proposed research.

b) Sources of Materials

- Describe the research material obtained from living individuals in the form of specimens, records or data.
- Describe any data that will be collected from human subjects for the project described in the application.
- Indicate who will have access to individually identifiable private information about human subjects.
- Provide information about how the specimens, records or data are collected and whether material or data will be collected specifically for the proposed research project.

c) Potential Risks

- Describe the potential risks to subjects (physical, psychological, financial, legal or other), and assess their likelihood and seriousness to the subjects.
- Where appropriate, describe alternative treatments and procedures, including the risks and potential benefits of the alternative treatments and procedures, to participants in the proposed research.

2) Adequacy of Protection Against Risks

a) Recruitment and Informed Consent

- Describe plans for the recruitment of subjects (where appropriate) and the process for obtaining informed consent. If the proposed studies will include children, describe the process for meeting requirements for parental permission and child assent.
- Include a description of the circumstances under which consent will be sought and obtained, who will seek it, the nature of the information to be provided to prospective subjects, and the method of documenting consent. If a waiver of some or all of the elements of informed consent will be sought, provide justification for the waiver.

b) Protections Against Risk

- Describe planned procedures for protecting against or minimizing potential risks, including risks to privacy of individuals or confidentiality of data, and assess their likely effectiveness.
- Research involving vulnerable populations, as described in the DHHS regulations, Subparts B-D, must include additional protections. Refer to DHHS regulations, and OHRP guidance (www.hhs.gov/ohrp).
- Where appropriate, discuss plans for ensuring necessary medical or professional intervention in the event of adverse effects to the subjects. Studies that involve clinical trials (biomedical and behavioral intervention studies) must include a general description of the plan for data and safety monitoring of the research and adverse event reporting to the IRB and others, as appropriate, to ensure the safety of subjects.

3) Potential Benefits of the Proposed Research to Human Subjects and Others

- Discuss the potential benefits of the research to human subjects and others.
- Discuss why the risks to subjects are reasonable in relation to the anticipated benefits to research participants and others.

4) Importance of the Knowledge to be Gained

- Discuss the importance of the knowledge gained or to be gained as a result of the proposed research.

- Discuss why the risks to subjects are reasonable in relation to the importance of the knowledge that reasonably may be expected to result.

5) Data and Safety Monitoring Plan

- If the research includes a clinical trial, create a heading entitled “Data and Safety Monitoring Plan.”
- Provide a general description of a monitoring plan that you plan to establish as the overall framework for data and safety monitoring.
- Describe the entity that will be responsible for monitoring and the process by which Adverse Events will be reported.

Vertebrate Animals

If vertebrate animals are involved in the project, address each of the five points below.

1) Provide a detailed description of the proposed use of the animals for the work outlined in the Research Plan Narrative. Identify the species, strains, ages, sex and numbers of animals to be used in the proposed work.
2) Justify the use of animals, the choice of species and the numbers to be used. If animals are in short supply, costly, or to be used in large numbers, provide an additional rationale for their selection and numbers.
3) Provide information on the veterinary care of the animals involved.
4) Describe the procedures for ensuring that discomfort, distress, pain and injury will be limited to that which is unavoidable in the conduct of scientifically sound research. Describe the use of analgesic, anesthetic, and tranquilizing drugs, and/or comfortable restraining devices, where appropriate, to minimize discomfort, distress, pain and injury.
5) Describe any method of euthanasia to be used and the reason(s) for its selection. State whether this method is consistent with the recommendations of the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) Guidelines on Euthanasia. If not, include a scientific justification for not following the recommendations.

Budget (1 page)

Use the form provided to present a summary of the proposed budget.

Allowable Cost Items:

- Personnel. Allowable personnel expenses include salary and applicable fringe benefits for the PI, post-docs and graduate students (if they receive a salary) and other professional and technical staff.
- Consultant Costs. Identify consultants by name and estimate the number of days of service and rate of compensation.

- Study participants. Costs of recruitment (e.g., purchase of advertising), payments to subjects, patient care and other costs associated with the use of participants in the study.
- Equipment
- Facilities and Administration. Up to 25 percent of the total direct costs.
- Travel. ICRG grantees are required to present a poster at the annual ICRG Conference on Gambling and Addiction. Budget for travel to the conference in Las Vegas, Nevada.

Unallowable Cost Items

Funding will not be provided for the following:

- Administrative personnel
- Stipends
- Office furniture
- Tuition
- Dues and membership fees
- Maintenance/service contracts
- Construction, alteration, maintenance or rental of buildings or building space
- Recruiting/relocation expenses
- Entertainment/social expenses
- Pre-award costs

Budget Justification

In the space below the Budget Summary, explain and justify costs presented, providing calculations to demonstrate how amounts were determined. Enter text in the shaded area.

Appendix

The Appendix should include items such as a list of references cited and letters of support.

Submission Process

- Create a single PDF document named as follows: PI's Last Name_Seed_2026. Use a PDF creation software such as Adobe® Acrobat® Professional to create the PDF rather than scanning hard copies to produce a PDF. Such files can be difficult to e-mail or open and, therefore, will not be accepted for review.
- Email the application to Travis Sztainert (tsztainert@icrg.org) by **June 5, 2026.**

Questions? Contact Travis Sztainert, Director of Research and Education (tsztainert@icrg.org).

ICRG Scientific Advisory Board

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