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Alberta Gambling Research Institute

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Business Plan

For the Three-Year Period – April 01, 2018 to March 31, 2021

Introduction

The Alberta Gambling Research Institute (AGRI) is a consortium of the University of Alberta, the University of Calgary, and the University of Lethbridge. Its mandate, as determined in the Funding Agreement with the President of Treasury Board, Minister of Finance, is to support academic research related to gambling. It seeks to achieve this mandate through:

- sponsoring research into specific investigator-initiated and stakeholder-identified priorities,
- building research capacity at the partner universities,
- organizing colloquia and conference events, and
- disseminating information via the library and resource service program and other publication mechanisms, both print and electronic (www.abgamblinginstitute.ca).

Collaboration among Alberta's principal research universities (the Universities of Alberta, Calgary, and Lethbridge) provides the Institute with considerable versatility and the opportunity to match research expertise with specific projects. The Institute also fosters interdisciplinary and inter-university research both provincially, nationally and internationally. The Institute is an entity which links policy-makers, regulators, community organizations, the gambling industry, other major stakeholders, and the general public to improve the understanding of gambling behaviours. The founding document is a Memorandum of Agreement, an undertaking signed by the Partner Universities, which sets out the operating rules for the Institute. Another important guiding document to the Institute's planning is the annually updated Stakeholder Priority Action Plan.

Principal funding in the amount of \$1.5 million annually is received from the Alberta Government through Treasury Board and Finance under a five-year funding agreement. The current agreement ends on March 31st, 2021.

The operational/administrative hub for the Institute is located at the University of Calgary (Social Sciences Building, Room 820) and is staffed by a full-time Executive Director and an Administrative Assistant. A part-time Research Director is contracted and a full-time Librarian and Information Specialist, located at the University of Lethbridge, provides resources for any inquiries.

Alberta Gambling Research Institute Governance

The Institute is governed and managed by a Board that consists of two Directors appointed by and from each partner University, an external appointee (appointed by the President of Treasury Board, Minister of Finance), and an internal Board Chair appointee (appointed by the Vice-Presidents, Research, at each consortium university). Other members may be added as agreed by the Board and/or required by funders. The Executive and Research Directors serve in non-voting *ex officio* capacities. The Research Director is engaged on a contract basis. The role of the Research Director is to provide research advice to the Board and to promote and develop collaborative research arrangements provincially, nationally, and internationally.

Partner Universities

The Partner Universities that comprise the Alberta Gambling Research Institute are the University of Alberta, University of Calgary, and University of Lethbridge. In addition to promoting specific research initiatives, each university engages a research coordinator whose primary responsibility is to identify and stimulate interest in gambling research and to promote interdisciplinary, cross-university and external collaborative arrangements on behalf of the Institute. Support for capacity building and sustainability includes funding faculty positions and research assistantships, providing graduate and doctoral level student scholarships and research allowances, funding of post-doctoral fellowships, sponsoring visiting scholars, and contributing to research development costs.

Vision

To maximize the benefits while minimizing the negative impacts of gambling

Mission

To facilitate evidence-based broad research that informs gambling public policy and educates Albertans and the wider audience about the effects of gambling.

The Values of the Institute

- Independent and excellent multi-disciplinary research
- Evidence-based knowledge and information
- Collaboration
- Accountability and informing public policy

Goals

- To encourage, foster, and solicit research in order to better understand the role and impacts of gambling on the individual and society
- To ensure that research is collaborative and has stakeholder support
- To support the development of research capacities across broad research disciplines
- To contribute to making research findings accessible, useful, and applied

Core Businesses

Since its inception, the purposes and core businesses of the Institute have remained relatively constant, albeit with some shifts in program emphasis and specific research focus. Increasingly, through consultation and developing affiliations with stakeholders, there has been a migration toward collaborative undertakings, provincially, nationally and internationally.

The Institute has four core businesses:

1. Develop and promote gambling-related research, disseminate results, and facilitate take-up and external impacts
2. Develop and sustain gambling-related research infrastructure
3. Establish and encourage national and international gambling-related research linkages
4. Establish and efficiently conduct gambling-related research administration

Core business #1: Develop and promote gambling-related research programs and disseminate results

The Institute's purpose is to produce research findings that can be used to frame and implement both effective decision-making relating to gambling and gambling practices and, more generally, to expand the depth and breadth of research knowledge about gambling.

Goals

- 1.1 To conduct leading-edge research into all aspects of participation in gambling
- 1.2 To increase visibility of gambling-related academic research in Alberta
- 1.3 To translate the knowledge acquired from the conduct of research
- 1.4 To facilitate the knowledge uptake acquired from the conduct of research

Key Strategies

- Facilitate and oversee the conduct of academic research into stakeholder identified key priority areas
- Provide opportunities and support for new scholars to conduct research in this field
- Promote and support interdisciplinary/inter-organizational research across all disciplines
- Uphold peer review practices that ensure the highest quality of research
- Encourage researchers to publish and promote their research and to make it accessible to varied stakeholder audiences
- Encourage publication of Institute-sponsored research in peer-reviewed journals
- Support researcher-to-researcher link within, among, and outside the Partner Universities
- Utilize the Research Director role to fulfill the research objectives as outlined in Core Business #2
- Contribute to AGLC and other stakeholder-held events and colloquia
- Initiate cross-disciplinary linkages with AGRI-funded research (e.g. longitudinal research with genetics study)
- Engage in a longitudinal research project with multi-disciplinary gambling-related researchers and multiple national stakeholders
- Expand range of stakeholder representation
- Present evidence-based findings and research outcomes to a wide audience (lay and expert) through various knowledge transfer processes
- Develop and implement effective measures for evaluating research impact
- Utilize social media

PERFORMANCE OUTCOME MEASURES:

- Impact of international gambling research published by AGRI supported researchers
- Percent of stakeholders who indicate AGRI has been effective in providing information on current gambling research
- Institute funded evidence-based research has a demonstrable impact on building knowledge based policies, programs, and treatment services
- Percent of funded projects that have implemented demonstrable Knowledge Translation strategies
- Increase participation in stakeholder-initiated events
- Increase cross-linkages between AGRI and other research organizations/researchers

Core business #2: Develop and sustain a gambling-related research infrastructure

The Institute has a Research Director in addition to Research Coordinators (capacity building) and Research Chairs (sustainability) at each Partner University. Research Chairs are the most recent investment to engage new high potential researchers who are committed to working on priority research topics. The primary purpose of the Research Coordinators is to identify research opportunities, stimulate faculty interest, and support interdisciplinary and collaborative initiatives within and among university researchers. Each Coordinator liaises with other researchers and the Institute's administrative hub. The Research Director, in an advisory capacity to the Institute Board, provides overall research leadership. Through a range of initiatives and research affiliations, the Partner Universities continuously develop gambling research capacity in Alberta.

The Institute Library Collections and Clearinghouse Program, overseen by the Institute Librarian (with complementary librarian assistance at each of the other Partner Universities), coordinates inter-university and external library reference and information services, collection development, library liaison activities and website currency.

Goals

- 2.1 To increase the capacity and range of disciplinary representation to undertake gambling-related research at each of the Partner Universities
- 2.2 To develop broad-based research capacity (with particular reference to addressing stakeholder- identified priorities)
- 2.3 To provide comprehensive library resource support

Key Strategies

- Ensure Institute presence and representation at each of the Partner Universities
- Fund developmental opportunities for new scholars (e.g. scholarships, small grant program, presentation opportunities, sustainability positions and post-doctoral fellowships)
- Identify collaborative gambling-related research opportunities
- Maintain tri-university library liaison
- Provide access to a comprehensive collection of print and electronic research materials related to gambling research
- Maintain website currency
- Engage Research Services Offices in identifying and promoting AGRI grant, scholarship, and developmental opportunities

PERFORMANCE OUTCOME MEASURES:

- Ability to address 'research gaps' in stakeholder identified high priority areas
- User satisfaction with service provided by Librarian/Information Specialist and library resources
- User satisfaction with Institute website
- Increase number of disciplines conducting AGRI funded research

Core Business #3: Establish and encourage national and international gambling-related research linkages

The Alberta Gambling Research Institute is committed to achieving national and international recognition for its role in building the knowledge base in gambling-related research.

Goal
3.1 To forge strong collaborative links with national and international scholars and organizations involved in gambling research and studies

Key Strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Engage the services of outstanding academic peer reviewers from outside Alberta• Identify, initiate, and develop mutually beneficial national and international collaborative research initiatives• Host regular gambling research conferences and solicit stakeholder input on research topic sharing priority• Present workshops on gambling-related research• Participate in national and international conferences to ensure Alberta-based research is presented and the Institute profile is promoted• Utilize the Research Director role to fulfill the research objectives• Communicate the role of the Institute to stakeholders and general public about the contribution of sponsored research• Sponsor, organize, and support conferences, symposia, and colloquia as forums for communicating research

PERFORMANCE OUTCOME MEASURES:

- International and inter-organizational groups undertaking collaborative opportunities with the Institute
- Percent of affiliates providing positive feedback on their involvement with the Institute
- Percent of research projects with joint funding by the Institute as well as other granting agencies

Core Business #4: Establish and efficiently conduct gambling-related research administration

Annual audits are conducted on the Institute’s financial statements, as well as internal process audits by the University of Calgary as the administrative Partner University. Annual narrative and financial progress reports are required for all funded research initiatives, capacity-building allocations and sustainability position funds provided to each of the Partner Universities.

Goal
4.1 To administer the operations of the Institute in a way that is cost effective, efficient and transparent

Key Strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Oversee conduct of peer review and other research reporting processes• Ensure compliance with the terms of the Memorandum of Agreement and Funding Agreement and respective policies and procedures of each of the partner universities, and transparency in meeting audit requirements• Pursue supplementary sources of funding• Ensure accountability for grants, scholarships, and other AGRI-provided funding

PERFORMANCE OUTCOME MEASURES:

- Institute supported research is peer reviewed and endorsed
- Compliance with external audit requirements for financial statements
- Compliance with internal process, policy and procedural requirements to University of Calgary (as administering university)

Alberta Gambling Research Institute’s Financial Status

The signing of a Funding Agreement with the Treasury Board and Finance has secured the Alberta Gambling Research Institute’s financial viability to March 31, 2021. Financial statements of the Institute have been audited annually with the unqualified opinion of MNP LLP, Chartered Professional Accountants, that the statements represent fairly, in all material aspects, the financial position of the Institute and are in accordance with Canadian public sector accounting standards. The Institute’s Board approved budget and three year fiscal plan are submitted to the Treasury Board and Finance annually. The Board is committed to the utilization of the Institute’s resources in supporting academic research-related to gambling.