

Research Commissioning and Governance Procedure

Introduction

1. This document describes how research priorities are identified, and research projects commissioned, through the tripartite agreement¹ between the Responsible Gambling Strategy Board (RGSB), the Responsible Gambling Trust (RGT) and the Gambling Commission. It covers the commissioning and governance of a wide range of research, from individually commissioned research, to that undertaken through longer-term options, such as PhDs.
2. RGSB is the Gambling Commission's independent advisor on research, education and treatment. The Trust's research and commissioning responsibilities are managed by its Research Committee, which comprises those of its Trustees who are independent from the gambling industry.

Objectives

3. The objectives of this procedure are to ensure that:
 - i. Research priorities are clearly identified and addressed.
 - ii. Research projects are commissioned within the framework of a considered Research Programme, intended to provide insight and evidence that enhances understanding and contributes to effective policy making.
 - iii. The commissioning process is conducted transparently and to the highest standards of research governance. This will allow all stakeholders to have confidence in the integrity of the results and will encourage a wide range of academics and research organisations to engage with the delivery of this research agenda.
 - iv. The commissioning process respects the independence of the trustees of the Responsible Gambling Trust in pursuing this part of their charitable objects, within the context of that strategic framework.
 - v. The budget made available for research is allocated as cost-effectively as possible.
 - vi. There is clarity of responsibility and accountability.

Key principles

4. The key principles underpinning this document are that:
 - Research priorities should be transparent and published. It should be clear, to everyone, who is determining the research agenda, and the objectives it is intended to deliver.
 - Commissioned research projects should always have a clear, publicly available project brief, which sets out the question or questions to be addressed and the policy issues to which the questions are relevant.

¹[Statement of Intent](#)

- The criteria used to assess responses to individual invitations to tender should be publicly available, with clarity about who is making the decisions.
- There should be no grounds on which to question the integrity of research commissioned by the Trust's Research Committee, or to doubt its independence from any improper influence from the gambling industry or anybody else.
- Notwithstanding the agreed criteria in this Research Commissioning and Governance Procedure the primary responsibility for the Trust's research programme rests with its Research Committee. In commissioning work in support of the Trust's own strategic and charitable objectives, the Committee will be guided by but not limited to RGSB's priorities in those areas. The Trust's annual budget for research will be set by its Trustees in consultation with its Research Committee and RGSB.

Types of research

5. The primary objective of the research commissioned by the Trust's Research Committee will be to pursue 'directive' research to meet a specified strategic policy need or an urgent but un-anticipated policy need.
6. In addition, when resources allow, the Trust's Research Committee might commission 'responsive' research - ad hoc, opportunistic research proposals made by individual researchers and judged to be capable of making a contribution to broader research knowledge or providing useful insight into emerging areas so far not considered. Such proposals, especially when made by researchers experienced in areas other than gambling, can have a role in helping to grow the research capacity available to the Trust.

'Directive' research

7. The roles of the three parties to the tripartite agreement in relation to directive research are as follows:
8. The **Responsible Gambling Strategy Board** has responsibility for:
 - The establishment and maintenance of a detailed Research Programme. This programme will set out the research required to deliver the National Responsible Gambling Strategy. It will detail a thematic framework of research topics and give RGSB's view on the relative priority of each piece of work. RGSB will consult with partners during the preparation of this programme. This will include discussions with the Trust's Research Committee to ensure that the programme is deliverable.
 - The production and publication, at the appropriate time, of a Research Project Brief for each significant project within the Research Programme. The Research Project Briefs will outline the policy context and need for the research, set the research questions to be addressed, explain how they fit with strategic priorities and describe how the research will be used. The documents will follow a set format and are intended to provide a clear and concise outline of the research requirements. The Trust's Research Committee will be consulted during the preparation of the brief to ensure that they agree that the research plans are realistic and achievable.
 - Members of RGSB, and one or more members of its secretariat, attend the Research Committee as advisors. RGSB will attend to give advice to the

Research Committee to help it ensure that it is providing the best opportunity to achieve the aims of the Research programme and Project Briefs. This may involve providing a steer, opinion or guidance. RGSB attendees should clearly highlight issues where they have concerns, but decision making responsibilities ultimately rest with the Research Committee.

- RGSB may also be asked by the Research Committee to provide input to the commissioning process outside attendance at its regular meetings; for example, by participating in steering groups for specific projects.

9. The **Responsible Gambling Trust** has responsibility for:

- Developing, maintaining and delivering its own Commissioning Plan after considering the RGSB Research Programme and seeking to deliver as much of that programme as possible while meeting the Trust's overall charitable objects. The Commissioning Plan is developed in consultation with the RGSB. It needs to take into account available resources, timing constraints and policy needs. The Commissioning Plan may be adapted and revised to take these practical considerations into account as well as the Trust's own research requirements.
- The issue of Invitations to Tender (ITTs) for each major project. The ITTs will follow commissioning best practice. Having been discussed with RGSB in advance, these will include the Research Project Brief to allow the context and research questions to be clearly understood.
- The evaluation of bids in response to ITTs and the issue of contracts to the successful bidder. The scoring criteria and methods used to evaluate bids will be publicly available. Contractual documents will always be clear about the ownership of intellectual property and access by other parties to data collected during research projects. A process for providing unsuccessful bidders with constructive feedback will be established.
- Ensuring the quality of commissioned research through the establishment of appropriate steering groups of qualified individuals. The need for steering groups will be determined on a case-by-case basis, but criteria for establishing them will be based on the project's strategic importance, complexity, size, interdependencies with other pieces of research, and on the need to manage potential or perceived conflicts of interest. The Research Committee has a set of terms of reference for steering groups.
- Ensuring a process of robust peer review. Research will be published once peer review comments have been addressed. This process follows an academic peer review model.
- Publishing research papers. The Trust's Research Committee will continue the practice of sharing pre-publication drafts of research reports with the Commission and RGSB for the purposes of informing their thinking at the earliest opportunity. Views might be sought from the Commission and RGSB on whether the research has addressed the policy need identified in the project briefs. The Research Committee will only intervene to prevent publication of research if it has concerns about contractual issues. Research will not be delayed for political or commercial reasons.
- The Responsible Gambling Trust has delegated responsibility for oversight of all these responsibilities to its Research Committee. The Trust Board as a whole has

no influence over the research questions to be addressed, the scope of the research, the choice of researchers or the content of the research reports. They do, however, have responsibility for satisfying themselves that adequate arrangements exist to ensure the quality and integrity of the assurance process. Trustees with a current gambling industry background are specifically excluded from membership of the Research Committee. This arrangement, in combination with the fact that the overarching Research Programme and Research Project Briefs are determined by the RGSB, has been set up to ensure that the gambling industry has no opportunity to influence the nature or outcome of any research projects.

10. The **Gambling Commission** has responsibility for:
 - Working with DCMS and RGSB to anticipate research needs and ensure that any emerging need for research evidence is conveyed quickly and clearly.
 - Attending the Trust's Research Committee as advisors in the same capacity as members of RGSB.
11. All parties to the Tripartite Agreement recognise the need to ensure that these arrangements remain robust in ensuring the integrity and independence of research, but do not become overly bureaucratic and retain sufficient agility so that requests for research on emerging policy issues can be addressed swiftly.
12. Figure 1 in the annex shows these roles and responsibilities in diagrammatic form.

'Responsive' research

13. The arrangements for responsive research respond to the need to be able to collaborate and innovate with researchers to grow the body of research and build capacity in the gambling research community.
14. Research ideas might be raised by any party. The Research Committee is considering ways to ensure that these opportunities for funding research are widely understood, and taken up, by a broad range of academics and researcher organisations.
15. The Responsible Gambling Trust's Research Committee will set out in its annual research commissioning plan the funding available for responsive projects.
16. Prospective applicants will be asked to complete pro forma outlining the research context, the proposed research questions and the need it is thought to be filling. These proposals will be considered by the Research Committee.
17. Proposers of any projects judged worth taking further will be invited to submit a full proposal outlining methods and costs for consideration by the Research Committee against published criteria.
18. Figure 2 in the annex shows these arrangements in diagrammatic form.

Supported by:

Annex

Figure 1: Research governance and strategy process for directive research

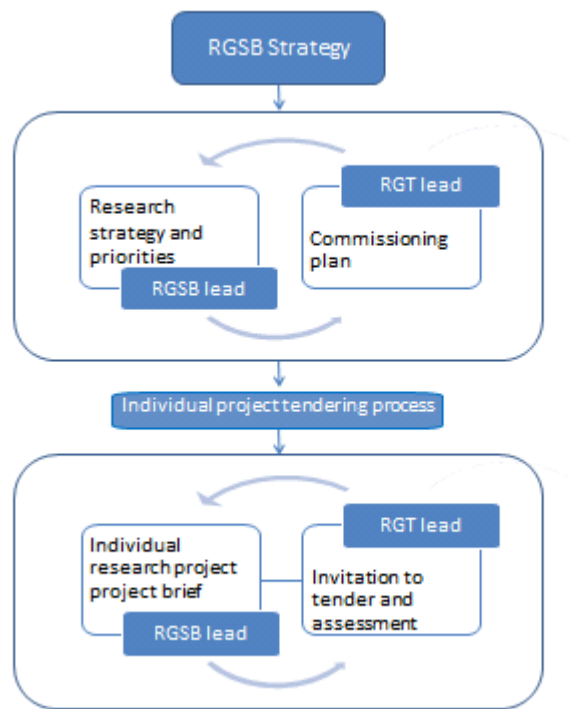


Figure 2: Responsive research commissioning and governance model

