



NATIONAL CENTER FOR RESPONSIBLE GAMING

Advancing Research, Education and Awareness

EARLY STAGE INVESTIGATOR GRANT

Up to \$65,000/per year for two years

Application Deadline: May 1, 2018

Introduction

The National Center for Responsible Gaming (NCRG) is committed to cultivating the next generation of highly trained scientists focused on research on gambling disorder. The Early Stage Investigator Grant is intended to provide scientists with the mentoring and research experiences necessary for research independence.

Applications for this award must propose a research plan that has: (1) intrinsic research importance in the area of gambling disorder; and (2) will serve as a suitable vehicle for learning the methodology, theories and concepts needed for a well-trained, independent researcher in the area of gambling research.

National Center for Responsible Gaming

The NCRG is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization that has served as the only national, private funder of scientific research on gambling disorders in the United States since 1996. (For a list of grants supported by the NCRG since 1996, visit www.ncrg.org/research-center/ncrg-funded-research) The NCRG 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 NCRG follow rigorous standards in awarding grants for only the highest quality research proposals. The current roster of Scientific Advisory Board members is listed on pages 13-14.

Eligible Applicants

The Early Stage Investigator Grant is intended for individuals who are within 10 years of completing their terminal research degree or within 10 years of completing medical residency (or the equivalent). The candidate for this award may not have been a recipient of an NIH Career Development Award or served as Principal Investigator of an NCRG grant. Candidates who are not U.S. citizens but have an appointment at a U.S. institution are eligible to apply.

Available Funding

Applicants may request up to \$65,000 per year in direct costs and 15 percent of direct costs for Facilities & Administrative costs. The award is not renewable and not transferable from one principal investigator to another.

Review Process and Criteria

An appropriate scientific review group convened in accordance with the standard NCRG peer review procedures, modeled on those of the National Institutes of Health, 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.
- Will receive a second level of review by the Scientific Advisory Board of the National Center for Responsible Gaming.

The following will be considered in making funding decisions:

- Scientific merit and quality of the proposed applications as determined by peer review.
- Availability of funds

The peer review panel will evaluate applications according to the following criteria:

Candidate

- Potential to develop as an independent and productive researcher
- Quality of the candidate's research and academic record
- Quality of the letters of reference from two well-established scientists evaluating the candidate's potential to pursue an independent research scientist career.

The letter of reference submitted by the proposed mentor will be considered independent of and in addition to the two required reference letters.

Research Plan

Reviewers recognize that an individual with limited research experience is less likely to be able to prepare a research plan with the breadth and depth of that submitted by a more experienced investigator. Nevertheless, a fundamentally sound research plan must be provided. Reviewers will evaluate the following:

- Scientific and technical merit of the research question, design and methodology;
- Relevance of the proposed research to the candidate's career objectives;

- Appropriateness of the research plan to the stage of research development and as a vehicle for developing the research skills described in the career development plan.

Mentor

Applicants must propose the involvement of a mentor to work with the PI in the development and conduct of the research project. The mentor should be recognized as an accomplished investigator in the proposed research area and have a track record of success in training independent investigators. Reviewers will evaluate:

- The appropriateness of the mentor's research qualifications in the area of the proposed research;
- The quality and extent of the mentor's proposed role in providing guidance and advice to the candidate;
- Previous experience in fostering the development of independent investigators;
- History of research productivity and peer-reviewed support; and
- Strength of the mentor's statement.

Environment and Institutional Commitment to the Candidate

Reviewers will look for a clear commitment of the institution to ensure that the candidate's effort will be devoted directly to research and activities related to the successful development of a research career. Reviewers will consider the:

- Adequacy of research facilities and training opportunities, including faculty capable of productive collaboration with the candidate;
- Quality and relevance of the environment for the scientific and professional development of the candidate; and
- Assurance that the institution intends for the candidate to be an integral part of its research program.

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.
- **Inclusion of Women, Minorities and Children in Research:** The adequacy of plans to include subjects from both genders, all racial and ethnic groups (and subgroups), and children as appropriate for the scientific goals of the research

will be assessed. Plans for the recruitment and retention of subjects will also be evaluated.

- **Care and Use of Vertebrate Animals in Research:** If vertebrate animals are to be used in the project, the five items described in [PHS Form 398 research grant application instructions](#) will be assessed.
- **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.

Additional Review Considerations

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

Application Instructions

Applications are due on May 1, 2018. Download the application form from www.ncrg.org/research-center. The application form provides the Face Page, page two, and the Budget pages. A biosketch form is available for download at www.ncrg.org/research-center or use the NIH form. The narrative section should be presented in your own document.

Application Outline

- ✓ Face Page (form provided)
- ✓ Project Summary/Abstract, Senior/Key Personnel (form provided)
- ✓ Biographical Sketches (form provided or use NIH form)
- ✓ Budget Summary and Justification for Year 1 (form provided)
- ✓ Budget Summary and Justification for Year 2 (form provided)

Narrative

- ✓ The Candidate
- ✓ Career Development Plan
- ✓ The Mentor(s)
- ✓ Environment and Institutional Commitment to the Candidate
- ✓ Research Plan
- ✓ Training in the Responsible Conduct of Research
- ✓ Protection of Human Subjects/Vertebrate Animals

Appendix

Letters of Reference (submit separately)

FACE PAGE (1 page)

Insert text in the shaded areas.

The **Principal Investigator (PI)**, the candidate for the Early Stage Investigator Grant, is responsible for the scientific and technical direction of the project and is the primary contact for the NCRG. 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 on January 1, 2019 and conclude no later than December 31, 2020.

Funds Requested. Fill in the amounts requested for year 1 and year 2. Requests may not exceed \$65,000 per year in direct costs plus 15 percent of direct costs for Facilities & Administrative costs (also known as “indirect costs”).

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 principal investigator must provide a copy of the IACUC and/or IRB letter to the NCRG before award funds will be released. Pending approvals at the time of application submission are acceptable.

Certifications. Provide the electronic signatures of the PI and the Official Signing for the Organization by typing the name in the shaded area and checking the Confirm Signature box.

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 and the mentor(s), Senior/Key Personnel are defined as individuals who contribute to the scientific development or execution of the project in a substantive, measurable way, even though salaries are not requested.

List the principal investigator, last name first. Then list the person who will serve as the PI’s mentor(s). 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.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES

Biographical Sketches of the principal investigator, mentor(s), and senior/key personnel should be included (maximum of four pages each). Please use the NIH form or download the biosketch form from www.ncrg.org/research-center.

BUDGET (2 pages)

Present the proposed budget for years 1 and 2 on the forms provided.

Please be aware of allowable cost items:

Allowable Cost Items

Personnel. Allowable personnel expenses include salary and applicable fringe benefits for the principal investigator. The total salary requested must be based on a full-time, 12-month staff appointment.

Travel. NCRG grantees are required to present a poster at the annual NCRG Conference on Gambling and Addiction. Budget for travel to the conference in Las Vegas, Nev., during Year 2.

Other Expenses. These might include research-related expenses and any other expenses of the training.

Facilities & Administrative Costs. Up to 15 percent of the total direct costs.

Unallowable Cost Items

Funding will not be provided for the following:

- *Mentor's salary and benefits*
- *Administrative personnel*
- *Office equipment and 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 on the form.

NARRATIVE SECTION (maximum 20 pages)

Formatting Requirements

This section should be presented in your own document. Please observe the formatting requirements:

- Arial 11-point font.
- A smaller type size may be used in figures, graphs, diagrams, charts, tables, figure legends and footnotes. However, applicants should use their judgment and avoid the use of excessively small type that would be difficult to read.
- Type density, including characters and spaces, must be no more than 15 characters per inch. Type may be no more than six lines per inch.
- Margins of at least one half inch on all sides on all pages.
- Single-column format for text.
- Standard paper size (8.5" X 11").
- Use any word processing software to create the text.
- Then, convert document to a PDF using a PDF-creation software such as Adobe® Acrobat® Professional. Scanning hard copies to produce a PDF typically results in excessively large files that can be difficult to e-mail or open and, therefore, will not be accepted for review.

Please follow the outline provided below.

I. The Candidate

The candidate for this award shall serve as the principal investigator of the Early Stage Investigator Grant. The candidate should be within 10 years of completing his/her terminal research degree or within 10 years of completing medical residency (or the equivalent).

In this section, discuss the candidate's research efforts to this point in his/her research career, including any publications, prior research interests and experience. Provide evidence of the candidate's potential to develop into an independent investigator.

II. Career Development Plan

- Describe a systematic plan: (a) that shows a logical progression from the candidate's prior research and training experiences to the training and research experiences that will occur during the award period and then to independent investigator status; (b) that justifies the need for further career development to become an independent investigator; and (c) that utilizes the relevant research and educational resources of the institution.

- The candidate and the mentor are jointly responsible for the preparation of the career development plan. A timeline is often helpful. The mentor may form an advisory committee to assist with the development of a program of study or to monitor the candidate's progress through the career development program.
- The didactic and the research aspects of the plan must be designed to develop the necessary knowledge and research skills in scientific areas relevant to the candidate's career goals.

III. The Mentor(s)

The mentor should be recognized as an accomplished investigator in the proposed research area and have a track record of success in training independent investigators. The mentor should have sufficient independent research support to cover the costs of the proposed research project in excess of the allowable costs of this award.

In this section, discuss the appropriateness of the mentor for this project. Provide 1) information on the mentor's research qualifications and previous experience as a research supervisor; and 2) a mentoring plan describing the nature of the supervision and mentoring that will occur during the proposed award period.

Similar information must be provided by any co-mentor. If more than one co-mentor is proposed, the respective areas of expertise and responsibility of each should be described. Co-mentors should clearly describe how they will coordinate the mentoring of the candidate. If any of the co-mentors are not located at the sponsoring institution, a statement should be provided describing the mechanism(s) and frequency of communication with the candidate, including the frequency of personal meetings.

IV. Environment and Institutional Commitment to the Candidate

- Describe the resources and facilities that will be available to the candidate.
- Describe how the institutional research environment is particularly suited for the development of the candidate's research career and the pursuit of the proposed research plan.
- In a clear statement, provide assurances that the candidate will be able to devote effort in developing his/her research program, that the remaining percent effort being devoted to activities related to the development of the research career will be covered, that the candidate will be released from normal clinical, teaching or administrative duties and that his/her appointment is not contingent upon this award.

V. Research Plan

A sound research investigation on gambling disorders that is consistent with the candidate's level of research development and objectives of his/her career development

plan must be provided. The candidate should consult with the mentor regarding the development of this section.

State the goals of the proposed research and summarize the expected outcome(s), including the impact that the results of the proposed research will exert on the research field(s) involved. List the specific objectives of the research proposed (e.g., to test a stated hypothesis, create a novel design, solve a specific problem, challenge an existing paradigm or clinical practice, address a critical barrier to progress in the field or develop new technology).

Organize the Research Plan section according to the following outline:

(a) Significance

- Explain the importance of the problem or critical barrier to progress in the field that the proposed project addresses.
- Explain how the proposed project will improve scientific knowledge, technical capability and/or clinical practice in one or more broad fields.
- Describe how the concepts, methods, technologies, treatments, services or preventative interventions that drive this field will be changed if the proposed aims are achieved.

(b) Innovation

- Explain how the application challenges and seeks to shift current research or clinical practice paradigms.
- Describe any novel theoretical concepts, approaches or methodologies, instrumentation or intervention(s) to be developed or used, and any advantage over existing methodologies, instrumentation or intervention(s).
- Explain any refinements, improvements or new applications of theoretical concepts, approaches or methodologies, instrumentation or interventions.

(c) Approach

- Describe the overall strategy, methodology and analyses to be used to accomplish the specific aims of the project. Include how the data will be collected, analyzed and interpreted as well as any resource sharing plans, as appropriate.
- Discuss potential problems, alternative strategies and benchmarks for success anticipated to achieve the aims.

VI. Training in the Responsible Conduct of Research

Applications must include a description of a program to receive formal or informal instruction in scientific integrity or the responsible conduct of research. Applications without plans for instructions in the responsible conduct of research will be considered

incomplete and may be returned to the applicant without review. Proposed programs should consider instruction in the following areas: conflict of interest, responsible authorship, policies for handling misconduct, policies regarding the use of human and animal subjects, and data management. Refer to the National Institutes of Health web site for additional guidance.

Document prior instruction in or propose plans for instruction in the responsible conduct of research in terms of subject matter and duration of instruction.

VII. Protection of Human Subjects/Vertebrate Animals (Maximum 2 pages)

Protection of Human Subjects

If applicable, summarize the 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.
- 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 section. 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.

APPENDIX

Include references cited in the narrative and other supporting materials. The Appendix pages are not counted in the 20 pages allotted to the narrative section.

LETTERS OF REFERENCE

Two letters of reference from well-established scientists addressing the above areas and any other evidence that the candidate has a high potential for becoming an independent investigator must be submitted directly to the NCRG by the application deadline. Send to Christine Reilly, Senior Research Director, National Center for Responsible Gaming, 900 Cummings Center, Suite 321-U, Beverly, MA 01915 (978-338-6610).

Submission Process

1. Create a single PDF document named as follows: PI's Last Name_Early Stage_2018. Upload the document to the NCRG Review Express website (<https://editorialexpress.com/ncrg>) by 5 p.m. (EDT), **May 1, 2018**.
2. The original hard copy should be mailed to: Shayna Adams, Program Officer, 900 Cummings Center, Suite 321-U, Beverly, MA 01915 (telephone: 978-338-6610).
3. Applicants will be notified by October 1, 2018.

Questions? Contact Christine Reilly, Senior Research Director (creilly@ncrg.org; 978-338-6610) or Shayna Adams, Program Officer (sadams@ncrg.org; 978-338-6610).

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