

## Alberta Gambling Research Institute

### 2012/14 Business Plan

#### Introduction

The primary aim of the Alberta Gambling Research Institute, a consortium of the Universities of Alberta, Calgary, and Lethbridge, is to support academic research related to gambling. It is achieved 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.abgaminginstitute.ualberta.ca](http://www.abgaminginstitute.ualberta.ca)).

Collaboration among Alberta's principal research universities (University of Alberta, University of Calgary, and University of 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 and internationally. The Institute is an entity linking policy-makers, community organizations, the gambling industry, other major stakeholders, and the general public in improved understanding of the impacts of gambling.

Principal funding, in the amount of \$1.5M annually is received from the Alberta Government and is administered by the Alberta Gambling and Liquor Commission under a five year (April 1, 2011 to March 31, 2016) funding agreement (signed September 27, 2011). Appended to the Funding Agreement is a *Memorandum of Agreement* signed by the partner universities on May 30, 2012 (also effective April 1, 2011) which includes consent by the partners to change the name to the *Alberta Gambling Research Institute* (previously called the *Alberta Gaming Research Institute*) to more accurately reflect its research orientation. Another important guiding document to the Institute's planning is its *2011/21 Strategic Research Plan* which was developed based on consultations with researchers, stakeholders, policy makers as well as external reviewer recommendations. This document was endorsed in draft form by the Institute Board (final approval pending alignment with final funding agreement and MOA requirements).

The operational/administrative hub for the Institute is located on the University of Alberta campus ( 8909S HUB Mall) and is staffed by a full-time Executive Director and Administrative Assistant. A full-time Institute Librarian is located at the University of Lethbridge.

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### ***Alberta Gambling Research Institute Governance***

Under the provisions of the new MOA, the Institute will continue to be governed and managed by a Board consisting of two Directors appointed by and from each partner University and an external Board Chair. Other members may be added as agreed by the Board and/or required by funders. The Executive Director serves in an advisory role and as the Board's secretary.

### ***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 'university coordinator' whose primary responsibility is to identify and stimulate interest in gambling research and to promote interdisciplinary as well as cross-university and external collaborative arrangements. Institute support for capacity-building includes funding faculty positions and research assistantships, providing graduate and doctoral level student scholarships and research allowances, 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.

### **AGRI Values...**

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

### **The Current Environment**

A number of trends which are salient to gambling research are occurring in Alberta, as elsewhere. Preferences of gambling formats and venues continue to change - while interest in gambling on games in progress and on the Internet is growing, horserace betting and bingo playing is diminishing. The number of casinos in the province has increased from 16 in 2000 to 24 in 2010 – including five under First Nations authority.

*Role of government* - In Alberta, as in most other jurisdictions, gambling has become an integral component of government revenue. Typical of most jurisdictions, public concern about its potential adverse consequences is not acute. Taxpayers', broadly speaking, prefer the tax offset to disbanding gambling. It is evident that 'gambling is here to stay'. The provincial regulatory body, the Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission, has adopted a 'social responsibility' focus.

*Charitable gaming model* - The charitable gaming model in the province has come to be relied on to support educational, recreational and community programs and services. Due to its associated moral implications, particularly for Catholic church leaders, periodically the conundrum surfaces as to whether funds obtained from gambling should be used to support educational and recreational activities.

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*Media consultation* – Media representatives frequently consult Institute-funded researchers for their expertise on various contentious issues – Internet gambling, crimes related to problem gambling, First Nations casinos, reliance on the charitable gaming model and others – with reasonable confidence that they will receive independent, informed commentary.

*Government restructuring* – To date, the provincial government, through the Alberta Lottery Fund, has been the sole significant funding source for the Institute. Over the ten years of the Institute's existence, there have been a number of reassignments of departmental and liaison responsibilities with government officials. Each change of this nature has some impact on the Institute's operations and reporting requirements. Also significant to the Institute's interorganizational affiliations was the absorption of the former AADAC into Alberta Health Services. Inevitably, each of these types of changes requires time to orient new designates and to develop an understanding of expectations.

*Developed expertise* – International recognition of the Institute's leadership in the field of gambling research, has lead to the (enviable) need to expand into more inter-jurisdictional and internationally collaborative research undertakings.

*Succession planning* – At its inception, there were three Alberta-based gambling researchers. These few provided the necessary dedication and leadership to enable the number to increase to over 70 partner university researchers and at least an equal number of students and research affiliates from outside the province. An important next step in the Institute's development will be to facilitate and support the replacement of senior researchers.

*Strategic research* – Initially, to build research impetus and expertise in the emerging field of gambling research, a 'major' grant program was established. The principal purpose was to 'entice' research talent to come forward – either to attract new researchers at the Partner Universities or to encourage some to migrate their related research programs to include gambling. Once this objective began to be realized, other means were sought to facilitate further expansion. New funding programs were added including small grants and scholarships. Most recently, the Institute began to commission proposals aimed at addressing some of the identified high research priorities of its stakeholders.

*Knowledge translation/transfer* – Researchers, policymakers, industry, regulators, treatment providers, and the general public all have unique information requirements. Evident need has arisen for processes and supports that facilitate 'multi-level' discourse and encourage the full range of stakeholders to identify and participate in collaboratively assessing and addressing information requirements.

*Specific areas of broad research need:*

*Social and economic impacts of gambling* - Over time, enormous focus has been put, in Alberta and other jurisdictions, on developing and applying a model for identifying and assessing the fullest range possible of individual, family and societal impacts of gambling. Initially, the broad disciplinary range of expertise was not available to address the issue. Recently, multi-disciplinary research teams, both interprovincial and inter-university, have laid the groundwork but much work remains to be done.

*Internet gambling* – The pervasiveness of this relatively recent format has accelerated it to the forefront of research demand. Some research has been completed, much is underway, but it will assuredly remain high on the gambling research agenda.

*Indigenous/First Nations gambling* – A continuing priority identified by stakeholders is the need for further, including comparative, research into gambling behaviors and industry involvement of First Nations and other indigenous populations.

*Longitudinal research* – Basic understanding of the gambling behaviours and habits of various age cohorts was identified as being an integral building block of future research. A Partner University multi-disciplinary team was commissioned to undertake a 5-year longitudinal study to follow five age cohorts of Albertans (over 1800 in total). This study, expected to be completed in 2012 has gained international attention for its comprehensiveness and potential contribution to the field of knowledge.

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*Other research underway*– New research is engaged based on the advice and priorities identified by Institute stakeholders at its annual meeting and via mid-year consultations. Follow-up is provided throughout the year with the posting of bi-annual research project updates on the Institute website. Potential research applicants are apprised of the priorities on the guidelines with the annual call for proposals. Some strategic initiatives are commissioned through periodic requests for research proposals (RFRP) contracting processes (See Appendix A).

### On the Horizon:

*Government funding* – Due to the size and scope of recently identified research priorities, there is an increasing need to leverage and diversify sole reliance on government funding. Individual researchers as well as interprovincial, national and international organizational collaborative projects will be required to cost-share. A commitment to engage in more ‘strategic’ stakeholder funded initiatives, commissioned by the Institute to address specific requests, will also augment basic funding. It is imperative that long-range basic funding be confirmed to best maintain the confidence of researchers and other potential funding partners.

*Charitable gaming model* – Anticipating that the charitable gaming model will continue in Alberta, to meet the measures of due diligence, provincial regulators and policymakers will rely on independent research advice.

*Media consultation* – The increasing numbers of researchers in the field of gambling, together with the growing confidence of media representatives and diversity of interest, suggest that demand for Institute-based expertise will not dissipate. Related to this point, is the commitment of the Institute to actively participate in *knowledge translation/transfer* activities that target dissemination of research findings to those in most need.

*Government restructuring* – Provincial government, and affiliated body, reorganization and restructuring is inevitable. Ideally, thorough planning of funding agreement details, together with good faith and effective communication, the disruption of Institute business will be minimized.

*Developed expertise* – Although developed research capacity has been very effective thus far, to allow focus on the continued building of research expertise at the Partner Universities as well as enable the expansion of the Institute’s purview of the Institute nationally and internationally, a position of ‘scientific/research director’ is being planned for in 2011/12. The primary purpose of the position, working in conjunction with the University Research Coordinators, will be to identify and facilitate collaborative research opportunities and promote interest in Institute supported research.

*Succession planning* – To ensure the continuation and maintenance of high quality gambling research at the partner universities, early on it was recognized that new research talent needed to be identified and fostered. In preparation for a ‘changing of the guard’, the Institute implemented both a small grants program (2003/04) and a two-tiered (masters and doctoral) scholarship and research allowance program (2008/09). Both programs been very successful and were expanded in 2011/12.

*Strategic research* – As indicated previously, pressure has increased to address large inter- and multi-disciplinary projects identified as high priority by Institute stakeholders. The Institute Board, through a short survey (conducted in July 2010), sought the advice of its representative stakeholder constituent on a number of matters. One of the items requested advice from respondents as to the relative percentage distribution that they considered was appropriate from the Institute research grant budget for strategic vs. Investigator-initiated research. The average indicated that 30% be allocated to strategic projects and 70% to investigator-initiated research. In cases of specific stakeholder request for Institute ‘commissioning’ of research through an *Request for Research Proposal* (RFRP), supplementary funds are expected to be contributed by the requesting organization.[Subsequent to the survey compilation, the five-year (2012/16) Funding Agreement was negotiated. In its final form, the proportion of funding that is required to be allocated annually to each is: \$250,000 to strategic projects and \$250,000 to investigator-initiated research (see Appendix B: Fiscal plan; 2011/12 – 2013/14).

*Knowledge translation/transfer* – The Institute is committed to collaborating with its widest range of stakeholders to determine and engage a process that will promote appropriate dissemination of research findings. Some of the specific means that are planned include:

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- redevelopment of the Institute website;;
- a requirement that research proposals provide information on planned KT activities;;
- updating of the Institute's communication plan with a KT focus; and,
- increased outreach activities (including through new Research Director position).

### **Observations:**

While stakeholder appreciation of the nature of university-based research has increased over time, some concerns remain.

*Stakeholder involvement* – Much progress has been made in gaining the confidence of stakeholders that the Institute contributes independent and unbiased high quality research to the knowledge-base. Regardless of this, it has been more challenging to engage the involvement and input from particular constituencies (including industry, First Nations and general public representation).

*Domain focus* – Recently, as in many other areas of research, there has been a migration from a single disciplinary focus to more inter- and multi-disciplinary initiatives that require a more collaborative approach.

*Project size* – Initially, only a few researchers participated in the field of gambling research with most research being conducted from a single disciplinary focus and small research teams. With the growth of the field, project size and disciplinary diversity have resulted in the Institute's sponsorship of fewer projects at higher funding levels (e.g.. LLLP, SEIGA)

*Researcher status* – Communicating the nature of the 'employment status' of university-based researchers to various audiences has been challenging. The important distinction between Institute grant support of research projects from 'employee' status needs to be clarified.

### **In the Future:**

The Institute, with a great deal of support from its stakeholders and wider research community, has made a great deal of progress over its first twelve years. Confidence has been confirmed in the seriousness with which it conducts business under the stringent policies and accountability standards of the partner universities.

Ideally, the Institute will be recognized as providing leadership in the field of gambling research. Some of attributes that will characterize the institute could include:

- Collaborative relationship with industry and gov't supporting research (providing reliable comparative data)
- International approach to research
- Information generated by AGRI informs decision makers (e.g. policy makers)
- AGRI is seen as a trusted partner in pursuit of responsible gambling
- More researcher participation in wide range of disciplines
- Increasing range of delegate representation at annual conferences
- Conference programs more diverse
- Increased participation in knowledge translation activities
- Long term funding is confirmed to best ensure researcher confidence
- A collective research community in Alberta is consolidated
- Research input is sought early for most effective influence on planned policy changes
- AGRI be seen as a leader in informing and influencing public gambling policy
- AGRI assume a role in ensuring government accountable in gambling regulation
- Adopt broad-based (multi- and inter-disciplinary) research portfolio – de-emphasis on disciplinary distinctions
- Support best practices based on evidence-based research findings

### Goals:

- To encourage, foster, and solicit research 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

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- To contribute to making research findings accessible, useful and applied

**Core businesses:**

Since its inception, AGRI’s purposes and hence core businesses 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.

AGRI has four core businesses:

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

**Core Businesses, Goals Key Strategies**

**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.

The Institute has research coordinators at each Partner University. Their purpose is to identify research opportunities, stimulate faculty interest, and support interdisciplinary and collaborative initiatives. Each coordinator liaises with other researchers and the Institute’s administrative hub. Through a range of initiatives and research affiliations, the Partner Universities continuously develop gambling research capacity in Alberta.

Goal	Key Strategies
1.1 To conduct leading-edge research into all aspects of gambling behavior 1.2 To increase visibility of gambling-related academic research in Alberta 1.3 To increase the capacity to undertake gambling-related research at each of the Partner Universities 1.4 To develop broad-based research capacity (with particular reference to addressing stakeholder identified priorities) 1.5 To identify and adopt appropriate <i>knowledge transfer/translation</i> processes and practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitate and oversee the conduct of academic research into stakeholder identified key priority areas (see Appendix A: Stakeholder Priority Action Plan)</li> <li>• Provide opportunities and support for new academics to conduct research in this field</li> <li>• Promote and support interdisciplinary/inter-organizational research across all domains</li> <li>• Conduct peer review processes that ensure the highest quality of research</li> <li>• Present scholarly findings and research outcomes to a wide audience (lay and expert) through various <i>knowledge transfer</i> processes</li> <li>• Encourage researchers to publish and promote their research accessible to varied stakeholder audiences</li> <li>• Publish Institute-sponsored research in scholarly journals</li> <li>• Maintain researcher-to-researcher link within, among, and outside the Partner Universities</li> <li>• Identify collaborative gambling-related research opportunities</li> <li>• Ensure Institute presence and representation at each of the Institute Universities</li> </ul>

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Performance Measures			
	Target 2011-12	Target 2012-13	Target 2013-14
Number of academic papers published in reviewed publications	26	28	30
Number of academic papers/presentations/ posters by Institute-funded researchers	35	38	40
Number of citations of Institute-sponsored research	Baseline		
Number of Institute-(co)sponsored research communications	25	28	30
Number of consultations and meetings participated in by Institute-based researchers/experts with associated provincial organizations	60	62	65
Number of scholarships and research allowance awards granted to graduate and doctoral students	6	8	9
Number of experts/researchers engaged in gambling-related research	70	72	74
Number of students engaged in gambling-related research	50	52	55
Number of university credit courses with gambling educative component	8	9	10
Number of developmental (small grant) awards to promote gambling research	10	12	12
Enrollment numbers in university courses with gambling-related component	300	350	400
Number of gambling-related external grants attracted by Institute-funded researchers	Baseline		

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

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

Goal	Key Strategies		
2.1 To provide comprehensive library resource support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain tri-university library liaison</li> <li>• Establish collaborative arrangements with similar Institute collections</li> <li>• Maintain website currency</li> </ul>		
Performance Measures			
	Target 2011-12	Target 2012-13	Target 2013-14
Number of gambling-related library queries	120	125	125
Number of website research queries per year	9,000	9,250	9,500

**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	Key Strategies
3.1 To forge strong collaborative links with national and international scholars and organizations involved in gambling research and studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engage the services of outstanding academic peer reviewers</li> <li>• Identify, initiate, and develop mutually beneficial national and international collaborative research initiatives</li> <li>• Host regular conferences on stakeholder identified issues in Alberta</li> <li>• Present workshops on gambling-related research</li> <li>• Participate in national and international conferences to ensure Alberta-based research is presented and the Institute profile is promoted</li> <li>• Pursue awards for gambling research and/or Institute</li> <li>• Communicate role of Institute and contribution of sponsored research</li> <li>• Sponsor, organize, and support conferences, symposia, and colloquia as forums for communicating research outcomes to various stakeholder groups</li> </ul>

Performance Measures			
	Target 2011-12	Target 2012-13	Target 2013-14
Number of reviewers from outside Alberta that conducted a peer review for the Institute	120	125	130
Number of out-of-province academic researchers /experts involved in Institute activities (workshops, conferences, etc.)	40	45	45
Number of collaborative projects involving researchers and agencies from outside Alberta	8	9	10
Number of out-of-province recipients of Institute publications (print and electronic)	350	375	400
Number of out-of-province Institute affiliated organizations	25	28	30
Number of attendees at Institute-(co)sponsored research events	125	130	135



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

Annual audits are conducted of the Institute’s financial statements as well as internal process audits by the University of Alberta (as the administrative Partner University). Bi-annual narrative and financial progress reports are required for each of the funded research initiatives and annually for capacity-building funds provided to each of the partner universities prior to the disbursement of next funding.

Goal	Key Strategies
4.1 To administer the operations of the Institute in a way that is effective, efficient and transparent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Only peer-reviewed and endorsed research projects are funded</li> <li>• The conduct of all Institute business complies with the terms of the Memorandum of Agreement and Funding Agreement and with the respective policies and procedures of each of the partner universities.</li> <li>• Supplementary sources of funding are pursued</li> </ul>

Performance Measures			
	Target 2011-12	Target 2012-13	Target 2013-14
Comply with terms and conditions of the MOA and Funding Agreement (Board structure, documentation of decision-making, etc.)	Baseline		
Provide timely and complete financial reporting	Baseline		
Coordinate grant reporting and payments with research offices of partner universities	Baseline		
Ensure budget approvals by Board that recognize broad mandate of Institute	Baseline		
Adapt program structure to meet research needs	Baseline		
Maintain annual administration costs consistent with research operations of comparable organizations	Baseline		

Note: *Impact measures* based on modification of types recommended in Canadian Academy of Health Sciences Menu of Preferred Indicators and Metrics of Impact (2009)