

2025 Social Science Research Grant Program

September
2024

Overview and Guidance for Applicants

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EXPLANATION OF TERMS

Anti-Doping Organization (ADO): Based on the World Anti-Doping Code (Code) definition, for the purposes of this document, it is any Signatory/Organization to the Code responsible for enforcing any part of the doping control process. This includes National Anti-Doping Organization, International Federation, Major Event Organizer or Regional Anti-Doping Organization.

Social Science Research Expert Advisory Group (SSREAG): A designated Expert Advisory Group (EAG) of the WADA Education Committee. EAGs are bodies created to provide ongoing advice and assistance to WADA Standing Committees and WADA Management.

Social Science Research Program (SSRP): The overall program that includes all related activities to do with social science research.

Social Science Research Strategy 2020-2024 (SSR Strategy): The document that outlines six key strategic priorities related to social science research and subsequent areas of focus, and outputs.

Social Science Research Grant Program (SSR Grant Program): The program WADA uses to choose research projects to invest in that are in line with its strategic goals.

Social Science Review Panel: A Working Group of the SSREAG that provides expert advice and analysis to assist in the selection of social science research projects submitted to WADA via open competitions for funding.

WADA: World Anti-Doping Agency

WADA Grants: The online grant management system used by WADA to manage the application and review process (<https://grants.wada-ama.org/>).

1.0 Introduction: WADA Social Science Strategy 2020-2024 and Social Science Research Grant Program

Context

WADA is the leading authority for anti-doping worldwide. WADA seeks to protect the integrity of sport by promoting, coordinating, and monitoring activities that contribute to the prevention of doping. As part of this, it plays a key role in facilitating research, including social science research.

Research is prominent in WADA’s 2020-2024 Strategic Plan as a key initiative of its ‘Lead’ strategic priority. It sets a clear focus for stakeholders – the need for ‘impactful research’ that helps us achieve our vision of doping-free sport. Leveraging data to enable more informed decision making across the system is also a strategic priority.

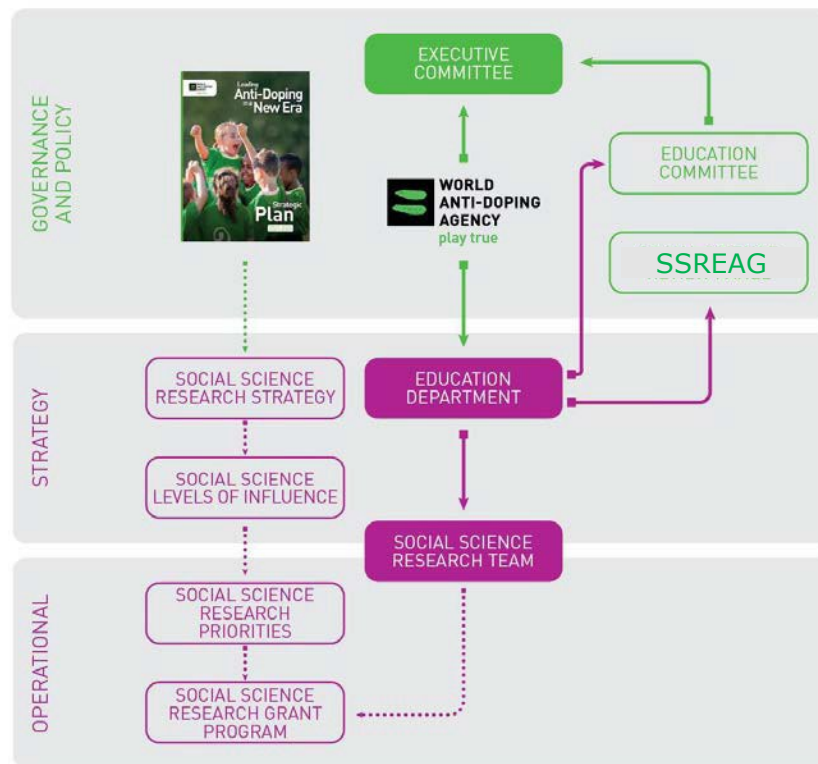


Figure 1: Overview of WADA’s SSR Governance Structure

Social Science Research – 2020-2024

To support WADA's research focus, the WADA Social Science Research Strategy 2020-2024 (SSR Strategy) sets the scene for an expanded Social Science Research Program (SSRP) that is more proactive and strategic in its approach. The SSR Strategy prompts us to take a leading role in the social science research agenda as it relates to clean sport, with the aim of maximizing its benefits for WADA stakeholders. The SSR Strategy also aims to address challenges within the field of social science research such as the translation and implementation of research into anti-doping programs and enabling investment in geographical regions that are traditionally less funded. WADA will instigate several initiatives to deliver the SSR Strategy over the next four years – this is our SSRP.

A core aim of the SSRP is to invest in social science research to maintain and increase our understanding of athlete behaviors that we are seeking to reinforce or prevent, alongside the social and environment factors that influence athlete behaviors. Such understanding will improve WADA's and the global clean sport community's ability to develop effective policies and programs, enhancing the sporting experience for all.

WADA's SSR Grant Program (Grant Program) has been the main mechanism to fund social science research since 2005. The development of the SSR Strategy expands the scope of social science research activities (the SSRP), with the Grant Program being one key initiative.

The impact of the SSR Strategy is currently being reviewed with a view to informing the development of a new SSR Strategy for the period 2025-2029. Initial analysis has demonstrated success in number of key areas, particularly in diversifying investment geographically. Over 60% of research projects funded between 2021 and 2024 are based in traditionally under-funded regions, compared with the 2005-2020 period. This shift in investment is directly related to the revision of the Grant Program that came into effect in 2020.

The investment decisions made through the Grant Program are aligned to the research priorities published as part of the Call-for-Proposals. Those wishing to apply for a WADA social science research grant should consult these research priorities, as outlined in this document, to be clear on what research areas WADA is most interested in investing in. The research priorities developed in collaboration with the Education Department and the Social Science Review Panel are approved by WADA's Education Committee.

The Grant Program is competition-based with the budget being allocated to successful applicants approved by WADA's Executive Committee each year.

2.0 Our Research Priorities

The social science research priorities have been developed based on a socio-ecological model that identifies six overarching levels of influence, with athletes placed at its center (as outlined in Table 1). This model was developed based on a review of the previous research priorities, literature reviews, consultation with partner organizations and WADA's Strategic Plan. It is also informed by a comprehensive Delphi study conducted with the clean sport community regarding social science research priorities initiated as part of an Erasmus and Collaborative Partnerships funded research projects ([RESPECT-Clean Sport Alliance](#)).

WADA may look to focus on research priorities in different years and as such, add weighting to projects addressing these priorities. Please be sure to refer to the published Call-for-Proposals each year on our website. Applicants can also make a case for investment outside of this model. A mechanism within the application process allows for a case to be presented for such research. WADA welcomes innovative projects and approaches within the model presented and outside of it.

Table 1: Levels of influence, research priorities and indicative areas of enquiry

Level of Influence	Research Priorities	Indicative Areas of Enquiry
Athlete	Athlete pathway and experience	<p>What factors contribute to doping vulnerability and what factors are protective at each stage of the athlete pathway?</p> <p>How do athletes experience the anti-doping system?</p>
	Clean sport behaviors	What are the behaviors that contribute to clean sport?
Athlete Support Personnel	Role and influence of ASP	What role and influence do ASP have on clean sport behaviors and doping vulnerability at each stage of the athlete pathway?
	Experience of ASP in clean sport	How do ASP experience anti-doping and how does that interact with their role in clean sport?
Education Programs	People investment in anti-doping	<p>What is the impact of investment in people within the antidoping system on implementing key anti-doping functions and overall contribution to clean sport?</p> <p>What supports people to do their jobs more effectively and what are the challenges?</p>
	Effectiveness of anti-doping/ clean sport	What are the components and principles of education programs and interventions that will maximize the development of clean sport behaviors?
World Anti-Doping Program	WADA Doping Prevention Model	What are the most effective methods for integrating and implementing the five strategies of the WADA Doping Prevention Model in anti-doping programs?
	Anti-Doping Policy Impact	What is the impact of policies implemented to prevent doping at each level of the anti-doping system?
Sport Environment	Sport Policy	What impact does wider sport policy have on the culture of sport and specifically, behaviors related to clean sport? (e.g., national sport funding structures, rule changes, CAS decisions, etc.).
	Evolution of sport practices	What impact do the evolving practices in sport have on athletes' and ASPs' clean sport behaviors? (e.g., technology, medicalization, commercialization, training innovations).
Society	Horizon scanning	What strategies and learning from other industries/ sectors can be applied to clean sport / anti-doping?
	Non-sport influences	What are the potential non-sport disruptors and influencers on clean sport? (e.g., societal, geo-political, cultural).

3.0 Overview of the WADA Social Science Research Grant Program

The Grant Program has three distinct tiers of investment that are available for applicants. The ‘tier’ is defined by the scale and scope of the research projects. A description of each tier is given in Table 2. The tiered system allows for more tailored application requirements for projects rather than a one size fits all approach.

Table 2: Overview of Tiers of Investment

Please note: This table provides a guide to help applicants determine which tier they should apply to. These are not criteria to guide investment decisions for projects and it is recognized there is likely to be a degree of fluidity between tiers. The primary criteria to determine which Tier you apply to should be the budget scale.

	Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3
Objective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Providing an evidence base to inform international anti-doping policy and practice - Facilitating international research exchange across academic disciplines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Contributing to program or intervention development or improvement at national level or within a single sport to support the prevention of doping 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Investing in smaller scale research projects to pilot or examine the viability of interventions or desk-based research, particularly projects led by early career researchers or targeting under-funded regions
Indicative Scope	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - International study - Multi/interdisciplinary team - Multi-sport - Partnership with at least two Anti-Doping Organizations (ADOS) - Endorsement of at least two additional ADOs - Policy impact investigation - Other sources of investment - Country/sport/gender and cultural differences as research variables 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - National study/multi-sport - Single sport study/multinational - Multi/interdisciplinary team - Partnership with at least one ADO - Endorsement of at least one additional ADO - Other sources of investment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Small scale projects looking at developing and piloting interventions, conducting literature reviews, position papers, desk-based research etc. - Piloting an existing program /intervention in an under-represented sport or region - Early career researchers* who may be applying as first time Principal Investigators - Please note: Tier 3 applications have a separate application form in WADA Grants system
Budget scale	- 75,000 - 150,000 USD	- 20,000 - 75,000 USD	- < 20,000 USD
Application process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Application submitted as part of the Call for Proposals 1. through the Call for Proposals procedure 2. Full application 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Application submitted as part of the Call for Proposals 1. through the Call for Proposals procedure 2. Full application 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Application submitted as part of the Call for Proposals - Targeted questions and clarifications where required

*Early career researchers are defined as post-doctoral individuals who have 5 years or less experience since their first academic/research appointment.

4.0 Application and assessment criteria

The closing date for applications for the 2025 Call-for-Proposals is **Monday 18 November 2024 at 11:59 pm (GMT)**. The review of the applications will be conducted and communicated within 10 weeks of the final investment decisions being made. Following the initial assessment, further questions and clarifications may be sought of applicants before a decision is made. Applicants are encouraged to submit ahead of this time, if possible, in order to facilitate a quicker turnaround time for decisions.

For all applications the Social Science Research Expert Advisory Group (SSREAG) will present its analysis to the WADA Education Committee who will make recommendations for investment. The final investment awards will be made by WADA's Executive Committee at its meeting in **March 2025**.

The full application must contain the following details:

- Administering institution's details
- Principal Investigator and research team details
- Project title
- Project description/summary. This will give details on:
 - A statement of the research problem
 - Research question(s)
 - Literature Review/Previous studies that support the proposal
 - Primary research priority
 - Hypotheses, if appropriate to your research design
 - Research design and methods
 - Research objectives
 - Policy/program/practice implications for the clean sport community
 - Significance of study for doping prevention
 - Dissemination plan and translation into practice
- Collaborations and partner organizations/ Letters of support from ADOs
- Research ethics review (see paragraph 4.6)
- Research ethics safeguards (see paragraph 4.6)
- Detailed research budget
- Gantt Chart with project milestones

- Other sources of funding
- Potential conflicts of interest
- Project relevance to anti-doping in sports
 - Principal Investigator CV (must have PhD or equivalent qualification)

A full application will be reviewed according to the following criteria:

1. Quality and importance

- The extent to which the project meets WADA's social science research priorities
- The significance and importance of the project to clean sport, and the contribution it will make, if successful, to preventing doping in sport
- The extent to which the research questions will be addressed during the research
- The appropriateness, effectiveness, and feasibility of the proposed research methods and/or approach
- The strength and breadth of the evidence base provided to underpin the rationale for the project
- Scientific merit
- Strength and robustness of the research design, conceptual/theoretical frameworks, literature review, research methodology and overall technical merit.

*Please review WADA website for previously funded projects. If your project is similar to a previously funded project, you will need to demonstrate how your project will add additional value to clean sport.

2. People and resources

- The appropriateness and balance of the research team to address the research questions
- The capability of personnel (including the quality and importance of their work to date)
- The adequacy of resources available
- The extent of consultation with athletes, including being part of the research process (with projects that will directly impact athletes)

- The degree of partnership with ADOs, whether they have been included as part of the creation process and level of involvement throughout whole research project

3. Value for money and likelihood to deliver on time

- Justifiable and reasonable calendar
- Justifiable and reasonable budget
- Adequacy of the proposed budget and the value for money vis a vis the contribution of the research to the clean sport community
- Other sources of funding – both direct and indirect (through in-kind contributions)

4. Outputs, dissemination, and impact

- The likelihood that the outputs and outcomes of the project will be highly valued and widely exploited, both in the research community and in the wider sporting contexts where they can make a difference
- Whether sufficient attention has been given to who the beneficiaries of the research might be and appropriate ways to engage them throughout the project
- Quality of Dissemination Plan and the translation into policy/practice
- Has the potential to deliver impact and influence clean sport

5.0 Review process

Step 1: Education Department Assessment

All submissions will undergo a preliminary assessment to ensure that they are complete, conform to administrative requirements and have been submitted according to the application process laid out in this document.

For example, that the minimal pre-requisites are met such as the Principal Investigator having their PhD or Post Doctorate, appropriateness of the application per tier, being in the realm of anti-doping or sport integrity.

Step 2: Independent Peer-Review (Tiers 1 and 2 only)

All eligible submissions will be sent to a minimum of two external peer-reviewers. Reviewers will be selected from a pool of international scholars and experts based on the relevance of their work to the proposal. Given that peer-reviewers are asked to assess the “capability of personnel/resources” (as described below), reviewers will know the identity of the research team members. Reviewers will be required to report any potential conflicts of interest and sign a declaration to that effect prior to commencing any review. Peer-reviewers will provide WADA with a report on the strengths and weaknesses of the submission and, to the extent possible, a recommendation for investment. Each applicant will receive upon request, a copy of the anonymous peer-review reports to the submission.

Step 3: Review by Social Science Research Expert Advisory Group (SSREAG)

All submissions and peer-review reports will be submitted to the WADA Social Science Review Panel, composed of senior researchers and at least one member of WADA’s Education Committee. The Review Panel and wider group will review all applications in order to identify the projects that will best contribute to priorities identified in WADA’s SSR Strategy. The SSREAG will convene to deliberate on all applications.

Step 4: Review by Education Committee and Decision by Executive Committee

The SSREAG will provide WADA’s Education Committee with the conclusions of their review. Taking these reviews into consideration, WADA’s Education Committee will make recommendations to WADA’s Executive Committee regarding the selection of proposals for investment. The Executive Committee will approve or reject the recommendations from the Education Committee.

To ensure an unbiased review process and should a conflict of interest occur at any stage, any peer-reviewer, SSREAG Member, Education Committee Member or Executive Committee Member concerned will give full disclosure of the nature of their conflict of interest and will be removed from being part of the selection process related to that application. An applicant may withdraw their application at any time during the assessment process. A request to withdraw an application must be signed by the Principal Investigator and an authorized person from the applicant’s institution of affiliation.

Post approval, successful projects will be subject to a research agreement. This agreement must be signed by an authorized person from the applicant's institution of affiliation.

5.1 Budget Policies

A budget template will be provided to applicants as part of the application process to document expenditure by category and for each year of the project. Below is an outline of WADA policies on specific expense categories. WADA does not cover the salaries of research team members or remuneration for replacement of research team members to institutions.

Research Assistant Services: Remuneration to a graduate student for gaining research experience may be offered. Include the following information in the application: detailed job description of the position and specific functions of the research assistant; required academic level (i.e., masters, doctoral or post-doctoral student); projected dates (starting and ending months/years) of employment; and salary. Please note that any institution fees (such as tuition) are not covered by WADA. Any contribution of the research to a student's academic pursuits (such as a PhD) must be fully disclosed.

Contractor or Consultant Services: Where private professional contractor/consultant services are needed, quotes from at least two potential providers must be submitted with the proposal. Justification for such services should include the specific expertise sought and explain why this expertise cannot be provided by a research team member. The unique qualifications of the contractor or consultant must be provided.

Equipment and Supplies: Items to be purchased or services to be obtained, such as survey and field expenses, and printing and mailing costs. Please note that WADA will not fund the purchase of computers or other office equipment.

Travel Expenses: Anticipated travel expenses must be specific and justified. Travel expenses should mainly be allocated for data collection purposes. Allowances can be made for dissemination of research findings at a later date.

The funds shall be used solely for the costs and activities specified in, and in accordance with the budget in the application, or the resubmitted budget, approved by WADA. However, a maximum of 20% of such funds may be used for indirect costs including but not limited to telephone, secretarial services, administration of the funds, rental of

laboratory space, etc. Any unspent funds must be returned to WADA.

Publication Costs: Allowances can be allocated for costs related to publications in peer-reviewed journals, initially to a limit of USD \$1,000.

5.2 Ethics

Research Ethics Review: In accordance with WADA's Research Ethics Policy, all research involving human subjects are required to be reviewed by the Principal Investigator's (PI) university ethics committee or some other ethical review process prior to funds being released. Proof of approval shall be submitted with the application or before the signing of the Research Agreement. If the project is in the process of being approved, WADA may approve the project contingent on ethics approval.

Research Ethics Safeguards (all applications): A brief statement of the ethical issues that may arise from your research project is required, and an explanation of how each of these issues will be addressed prior to, during, or after the research project has been completed. Include in your statement any potential ethical, safety or regulatory aspects of the proposed project, and the way they will be addressed in your proposed project.

WADA Ethics Review (all applications): Before WADA's Social Science Research Grant Program funds a research project, all projects involving human subjects must undergo an ethics review carried out in accordance with the terms of the Research Ethics Policy published on WADA's website. An ethics check will take place during the evaluation of all grant submissions.

6.0 Key Dates

Call for Proposal publication

Monday 16 September 2024

Full application due

Monday 18 November 2024, 11:59 p.m. GMT

Communication of decisions to
grant applicants

April 2025