



2025 ESPN Research Fellowship Applications

UNLV International Gaming Institute (“IGI”) is issuing a request for proposals (RFP) to award up to four (4), six (6) month, non-resident fellowships of USD \$5,000 each, to support impactful research initiatives that advance theoretical and practical understanding of responsible gambling practices in sports media.

SUBMISSION DEADLINE IS May 11, 2025

TOPICS OF INTEREST

Submissions are encouraged on a broad range of projects related to responsible gambling practices in sports media. We invite innovative proposals that will be of immediate value to sports and general media outlets, gambling operators, policy makers, and other relevant stakeholders in sports & betting media.

For 2025, our priority areas of interest are:

- Advertising & responsible gambling in sports media channels.
- Communication of evolving betting and gaming products, such as sweepstakes and DFS 2.0.
- AI applications in sports betting media.
- Role of media in gambling and esports.
- Influencer partnerships and social media advertising in sports betting.
- Responsible gambling practices for media consumption among youth audiences.

We encourage applicants to think creatively. Academic research proposals are encouraged, as well as alternative concept and deliverable formats such as business plans or corporate policy draft concepts. We are open to any project format that contributes to our understanding of the aforementioned topics.

TIMELINE

Please submit your proposal by May 11, 2025. Successful applicants will be notified by June 1, 2025. Projects are expected to be initiated by July 1, 2025 and completed by December 31, 2025.

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Applicants may be domestic or international, and must be affiliated with a non-profit research or academic institution. Applicants may be at any level of researcher expertise and career trajectory, including undergraduate, graduate, postdoctoral, and faculty & staff positions.

The fellowship is not a UNLV resident position. Therefore, successful applicants are not required to base themselves in Las Vegas for any portion or the entirety of the research project.

DELIVERABLES

You will be expected to produce a white paper and present your research findings during an IGI-hosted webinar during Spring 2026 (specific date TBD). Additional deliverables (e.g., academic journal publications, conference presentations, or policy advocacy for best practices) are also encouraged. Special consideration will be given to projects that find creative ways to disseminate findings to non-academic audiences.

FUNDING

The funding for this initiative is from ESPN. IGI enforces a firewall to protect the integrity of research supported by industry funds (<https://www.unlv.edu/igi/research-policy>); ESPN is not involved in the review or research process. Applicants may request up to USD \$5,000 (gross) for a period not to exceed six (6) months.

SUBMISSION AND REVIEW PROCESS

A review committee will be comprised of three reviewers from IGI's academic and research staff. IGI's decision, after review by members of the review board, will be final. Applicants should prepare a brief proposal (up to 1,000 words), double-spaced, 12-point font and should be addressed to Dr. Kasra Ghaharian, UNLV International Gaming Institute. Applications should include a title page with name, affiliation, and contact information. This title page does not apply toward the word count.

Submissions will be evaluated based upon the following criteria:

1. **Significance and Impact:** Does the project address an important problem or a critical barrier to progress in the topic(s) of interest? What topic(s)/research question(s) will your study address? Submissions should emphasize how the project can effect positive change in responsible gambling in sports media and how the findings can be of use to stakeholders around the world. Innovative solutions that create new and useful knowledge are particularly encouraged.
2. **Research Plan and Rigor:** Describe your proposed study design and strategic execution plan. Submissions should emphasize how the project will be completed, including a well-

reasoned strategy on any research methodology, analyses, timelines (including start and complete dates), research plan, and deliverables. For academic proposals, include established details and rationale including e.g., the study design, methods, sample, and statistical analyses, etc. For non-academic submissions, adapt this section to fit your specific format while ensuring a rigorous approach. For example, while a business plan may not include a “methods” section, it should include components that are typical for a well-structured plan including a business description, market analysis, and forecasts/projections. Innovative deliverables that will expand the reach of knowledge dissemination beyond the CFP’s stated deliverables are encouraged.

3. **Dissemination:** How will your research findings be communicated?
4. **Personnel:** Applicant should describe the appropriate and relevant experience that will serve this project well.
5. **Budget:** The fellowship will be delivered as a one-time lump sum payment of USD \$5,000 to one individual awardee. A simple budget and budget justification for the full amount is required. It is anticipated that in most cases, personnel costs for the fellow will constitute the entirety of these budgets, unless there exists a compelling reason to spend funds in a different fashion. Institutional support (in the form of administrative assistance, facilities, or other resources) will be considered when applicable.
6. **Human Subjects Research:** Should any primary research be conducted with human subjects (including both exempt and full review formats), submissions should outline how human subject reviews will be undertaken with an appropriate institutional review board.

INSTRUCTIONS

Send proposal via email to Kasra Ghaharian, Director of Research (kasra.ghaharian@unlv.edu) by 5 p.m. PST, May 11, 2025, using the subject line “ESPN Fellowship Application 2025 – Last Name”

Applications received after the above deadline will not be considered.

Questions? Contact Kasra Ghaharian via email.