

# Developing Canada's First National Low-Risk Gambling Guidelines

## The Challenge

On average, 79% of Canadian adults gamble (Canadian Partnership for Responsible Gambling, 2015). Gambling is a legal behaviour that poses potential risks to Canadians. Problem gambling has been recognized as a significant public health issue. Yet people are not aware of the risks of problem gambling and there is a lack of evidence-informed guidelines to provide individuals who gamble with recommendations about how to gamble in a manner that poses minimal risk to themselves and those around them. There is an important need for such guidelines to help individuals who gamble make well-informed, responsible decisions about their gambling behaviours and to reduce gambling-related harms for themselves and those around them.

The Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse (CCSA) was created by Parliament to provide national leadership to address substance use in Canada. A trusted counsel, we provide national guidance to decision makers by harnessing the power of research, curating knowledge and bringing together diverse perspectives.

## The Response

CCSA has accepted the mandate to lead a project aimed at developing Low-Risk Gambling Guidelines (LRGGs) based on the evidence by the year 2020. Funded by *Mise sur toi*, these new guidelines will help Canadians make informed, responsible decisions about their gambling behaviour in general and in specific situations or circumstances that are particularly risky, such as in the context of alcohol use and consumption of other substances.

## The Approach

The project will be guided by a governance structure that includes:

- A Low-Risk Gambling Guidelines Scientific Working Group (LRGG-SWG) composed of scientists and experts in the field tasked with the development of LRGGs; and
- A National Low-Risk Gambling Advisory Committee (NLRG-AC) composed of representatives from organizations addressing gambling related issues who will provide guidance over the course of the project, and facilitate the uptake and mobilization of evidence-informed LRGGs by key networks and stakeholders.

The LRGG-SWG will develop a scientifically rigorous methodology and conduct the research necessary to develop the LRGGs. It will also collect new data on low-risk gambling for Canada based on the most robust methodology and using the highest quality of evidence from population surveys on gambling in Canada and other countries.



## The Importance of Gambling Guidelines

LRGGs will help individuals who gamble and their close social networks make well-informed and responsible decisions about their gambling behaviour. They will enable consistent advice and messaging across all jurisdictions about how to gamble in a low-risk manner, based on the latest evidence.

## Who Gambling Guidelines Are For

LRGGs are for:

- Anyone who gambles and their close social networks;
- Policy makers, gambling regulators and operators tasked with the promotion of responsible gambling initiatives within their respective authorities and associations;
- Those developing training material and capacity-building programs for healthcare providers and allied professionals on how to identify risky gambling behaviours, as well as to prevent and address the harms associated with concurrent problem gambling and problematic substance use; and
- Those within the public health sector developing awareness campaigns to inform the public about low-risk gambling in general and specific risky situations or circumstances.

## Progress to-Date

The project's governance framework has been established.

	<b>National Low-Risk Gambling Advisory Committee (NLRG-AC)</b>	<b>Low-Risk Gambling Guidelines Scientific Working Group (LRGG-SWG)</b>
<b>Co-Chairs</b>	Louise Nadeau, University of Montreal Rita Notarandrea, CCSA	David Hodgins, University of Calgary Matthew Young, CCSA
<b>Purpose</b>	To provide advice over the course of the project, and assist in the dissemination, promotion, uptake and use of LRGGs by key networks and stakeholders.	To provide expert advice and conduct research to support the development of the LRGGs. The group operates as an independent expert working group that will consult with the NLRG-AC, as required.
<b>Membership</b>	Representatives from organizations and sectors addressing gambling-related issues, such as prevention, treatment, public health and finance, as well as the gambling industry and regulators.	Researchers with subject-matter expertise in gambling and addiction.

## National Low-Risk Gambling Advisory Committee

The inaugural meeting of the NLRG-AC was held on November 8, 2016, in Montreal. The objectives of this meeting were:

- To provide an overview of the project and discuss the plan of action, including research methodology, that will be used to develop the LRGGs;
- To review and approve the Terms of Reference (TOR), and discuss additional strategic considerations to take into account in developing and promoting the LRGGs;
- To discuss opportunities for alignment between NLRG-AC members' priorities and the promotion of the LRGGs; and



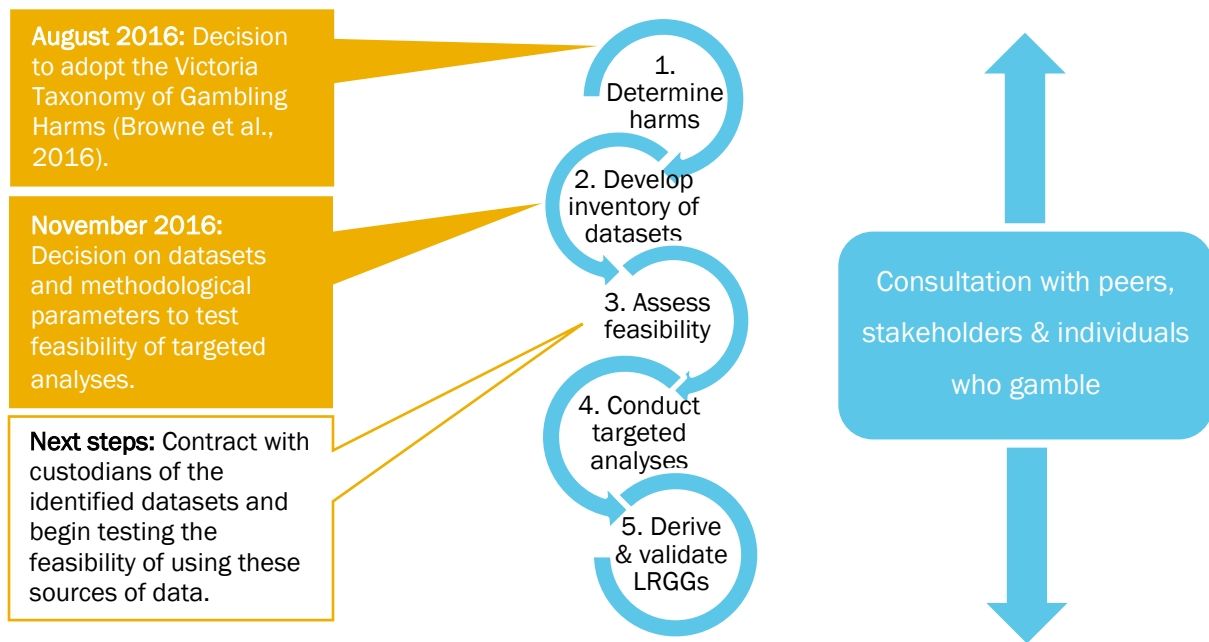
- To discuss an approach to facilitate the communication of the project's progress to key networks and stakeholders.

Members endorsed the need for evidence-informed LRGs and were supportive of the proposed approach to developing the LRGs. The NLRG-AC's TOR were approved. The NLRG-AC members also agreed to meet regularly during the project's term and to maintain continuous and bidirectional communication to share feedback among CCSA's project team, the LRG-SWG and NLRG-AC members, and their networks.

### Low-Risk Gambling Guidelines Scientific Working Group

The LRG-SWG was formed in spring 2016. The group has developed the scientifically rigorous methodology necessary to develop the LRGs. In short, the research will use existing population data sets from multiple countries to assess the association between gambling patterns (i.e., frequency, expenditure and duration) and the likelihood of experiencing gambling-related harms. The research plan and the group's progress is presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1: LRG-SWG Progress to-Date



### Final LRGs

The final LRGs will be released in a technical report for addiction professionals, policy makers, regulators, communication experts and gambling providers. The aim is that these guidelines will be widely used in communication products that educate the general public about low-risk gambling in general and in specific, hazardous situations such as in the context of alcohol or substance use.

### Join Us

Throughout the course of the project, the project team will be reaching out to those interested in the national LRGs with updates on progress and opportunities to be involved. You can sign up to our mailing list by emailing [gambling@ccsa.ca](mailto:gambling@ccsa.ca).



## References

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