



**REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS**

# **Causal Research on the Impacts of Legalized Sports Betting**



**Arnold Ventures**

Evidence and Evaluation and  
Strategic Initiatives

**July 2025**



## OVERVIEW

Arnold Ventures (AV) is a philanthropy dedicated to improving the lives of all Americans through evidence-based policy solutions that maximize opportunity and minimize injustice. We focus on improving systems where outcomes are falling short, incentives are misaligned, and the time is right for change. By funding rigorous research, we strive to better understand the root causes of problems and build the evidence about what works to solve them. Using this research, we advocate for policy reforms at all levels of government and build durable, bipartisan coalitions to drive lasting change and impact.

## The Opportunity

In the years since the U.S. Supreme Court 2018 *Murphy v. NCAA* decision, 38 states have legalized sports betting, rapidly reshaping the consumer finance, behavioral health, and regulatory landscape. Participating states have also benefited from a significant new source of tax revenue, collecting more than \$1.8 billion in 2023 alone, according to the Tax Foundation. Despite the scope and speed of legalization, little is known about the individual- and household-level financial, social, and behavioral impacts of legalized sports betting. We also know little about how regulation, enforcement, and consumer protections influence these outcomes. In the absence of rigorous research, state and federal decision-makers must navigate high-stakes choices without a robust evidence base.

**This RFP seeks to address that gap by funding rigorous, causal research that deepens our understanding of the financial, social, and behavioral impacts of legalized sports betting. We are interested in studies that produce actionable insights for policymakers, regulators, and advocates—particularly at the state level—where betting frameworks are rapidly evolving and evidence needs are acute. This RFP will support both Randomized Controlled Trials (RCTs) and rigorous Quasi-Experimental Designs (QEDs).**

Studies that can inform policy might examine betting-related outcomes, compare regulatory approaches, or test interventions aimed at changing behavior. While we are open to a range of possible research questions, we offer a set of questions below to highlight areas of particular interest for this RFP:

- **What are the financial, social, and behavioral impacts of legalized sports betting at the individual or household level?**

Projects might examine financial outcomes such as changes in credit scores, debt accumulation, delinquencies, or bankruptcy filings. Behavioral outcomes might include chasing losses, betting with borrowed money, or difficulty stopping. Social outcomes might include educational attainment, labor market outcomes, or interactions with the criminal justice system.

- **How do different policies and state regulatory frameworks influence consumer behavior and outcomes?**

Researchers might compare the effects of policy features such as betting limits, deposit restrictions, self-exclusion requirements, licensing regimes, or promotional variation.

- **How does platform and product design influence betting behavior and outcomes?**

Studies might assess the impacts of interface features such as gamification, promotions, or app integration (e.g., casino and sports betting).

- **What are the broader public-sector impacts of betting legalization?**

Proposals might examine effects on tax revenue, addiction treatment demand, public benefit participation, deterrence of illegal betting markets, financial hardship during tax refund periods, job creation, economic growth, tourism and hospitality revenue, or interactions with the criminal justice or health care systems.

- **What are the effects of advertising and the normalization of sports betting?**

Projects might explore how exposure to sports betting—especially through sports media, influencer marketing, social media platforms, and via promotions—shapes attitudes, uptake, and risky engagement, particularly among young men.

## Selection Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

CRITERION	DETAIL
<b>Policy Relevance</b>	<p><b>Why it matters:</b></p> <p>We believe research should inform actionable strategies and resource allocation, aligning with the priorities and pressing needs of decision-makers and communities.</p> <p><b>What we are looking for:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research on a program, policy, or regulation in the United States</li> <li>• Clear description of how the research question is relevant to policymakers in the United States</li> <li>• Demonstration of how the project has the potential to inform or influence policy/practice at the state and/or federal level, along with discussion of available policy levers</li> </ul>
<b>Study Design</b>	<p><b>Why it matters:</b></p> <p>We support research that aims to accurately measure impact and ensure that conclusions drawn are valid and reliable using RCTs or QEDs.</p> <p><b>What we are looking for:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear articulation of the program, policy, or regulation being evaluated, the research question(s), the primary outcome(s) of interest, and duration of follow-up</li> <li>• Study design overview, including the proposed estimation strategy, plans to address threats to validity, necessary robustness checks, and if this is a prospective or retrospective study</li> <li>• Articulation of why the study design was selected and how it will protect against selection bias</li> <li>• Sample sizes for the primary outcome(s)</li> <li>• Data sources and plans to secure data sharing agreements (preferably using administrative data, wherever feasible)</li> <li>• Study timeline that outlines key steps in the project</li> </ul>

## How to Apply

We ask interested researchers to submit a letter of interest (LOI) for AV consideration (maximum of three pages) via our applicant [portal](#). This RFP will remain open until September 15, 2025, and all LOIs must be submitted by that date. Applicants may use their own format, with single or double spacing, an 11-point font or larger, and one-inch margins. In addition to the LOI, please also share the following under the Optional Upload for Supporting Documents section on the portal (this will not count towards the LOI page limit):

- **Study team overview:** Outline the project team in 1-2 pages, including an overview of roles and responsibilities for key project members. You will be asked to upload brief (1-3 pages) CVs of key members of the study team to the portal.
- **Budget request summary:** Applicants should specify the amount of funding requested from AV, reflecting the project timeline and the study scope, and include an approximate project budget that is consistent with [AV's cost policy](#). While a formal budget is not required at this stage, applicants should provide detail on the anticipated drivers of project costs (e.g., personnel time, data acquisition, travel, and administrative costs).<sup>1</sup>

Applicants whose letters are reviewed favorably, based on the eligibility and selection criteria above, will be invited to submit a full proposal.

## Timeline for Submission & Review

STAGE	DATE
LOI Submission Deadline	September 15, 2025
Notification of Full Proposal Invitation	November 15, 2025
Full Proposal Submission Deadline	January 15, 2026
Notification of Awards	April 15, 2026
Grant Period Begins	May 15, 2026

You can find responses to frequently asked questions [here](#). Please direct other questions about the selection criteria or application process to [SportsBettingRFP@arnoldventures.org](mailto:SportsBettingRFP@arnoldventures.org).

## Statement on Commitment to Assessing Impact on All Communities

AV's mission includes maximizing opportunity and minimizing injustice. We encourage research projects that use inclusive research methods and frameworks, including assessments of whether policy and practice have a disproportionate impact on particular communities, whenever appropriate and possible.

## Statement on Commitment to Transparency and Research Integrity

AV is committed to the principles of research transparency and integrity, as explained in our [Guidelines for Investment in Research](#). As a condition of any grant award, we will ask awardees to pre-register the study on the Open Science Framework website. Prior to the commencement of the study, we will ask grantees to make public a copy of the research and analysis plan described in the proposal. In addition, we will ask grantees to make their datasets and related materials (e.g., de-identified data, programming/code, and output) publicly available if permitted through data sharing agreements.

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<sup>1</sup> *In general, this RFP is focused on funding research projects where other parties have agreed to pay the cost of delivering the intervention or practice. However, we may consider supporting the costs of intervention delivery in a limited number of awards if such support would be needed to enable a rigorous impact evaluation (e.g., increase study power). Applicants seeking such funding should indicate so in their submission and provide the compelling reason for the funding request.*