

WADA Social Science Research Expert Advisory Group (SSREAG) Meeting

Meeting Outcomes

27,28,29 March 2023

Members

Rob DONOVAN (Chair)

Thierry ZINTZ

Kim NOLTE

Gretchen LOWERISON

Sian CLANCY

Andrew HEYES

Derwin CHAN

Susan BACKHOUSE

Thais CEVADA

WADA

Tony CUNNINGHAM

Kelsey MARTIN

Observer

David PAVOT

The meeting of WADA's Social Science Expert Advisory Group was held in a hybrid format on 27,28,29 March 2023. The focus of the meeting was to review and analyze all Grant Program applications, provide a summary of recommendations for funding to the Education Committee and to discuss key activities and priorities for 2023.

The outcomes and key summary of agreements made by the Social Science Research Expert Advisory Group (SSREAG) are outlined below.

1. The chair Rob Donovan formally hosted the hybrid meeting and welcomed all members, WADA staff and the Observer.
2. In relation to SSR Grant Program, the SSREAG were provided with an overview of the applications received to date and the peer review process conducted prior to the meeting. In total, 33 Expressions of Interest were received (13 for Tier 1 and 20 for Tier 2). Twenty-one progressed to the full application phase following an initial review by the Social Science Research Review Panel (SSRRP), a sub-group of the SSREAG. Thirty Tier 3 applications were received. Overall, 51 applications were sent to the

review stage. All Tiers 1 and 2 projects received at least two external technical assessments. Where a divergent opinion was received, a third review was sought. For Tier 3, members of the SSRRP conducted the initial peer reviews. Altogether, 130 peer reviews were conducted as part of the process.

3. In line with WADA's Conflict-of-Interest Policy, members who had declared a conflict of interest for projects, left the meeting and abstained from the discussions specifically relating to these projects as well as the tier they were in. These members also abstained from the final ranking discussions of applications.
4. SSREAG members discussed and analyzed in detail the SSR Grant Applications by Tier, commencing with Tier 1 projects, followed by Tier 2 and Tier 3. These discussions informed the peer review process and focused on: the alignment to WADA's SSR research priorities; the potential contribution to clean sport; and the scientific merit of the proposed research design and methodology. This first phase of discussion was to identify applications that were deemed fundable and probably fundable.
5. Projects deemed fundable were ranked and then confirmed as the recommendations to be shared with the Education Committee. A total of 9 projects were identified to be recommended for funding: one in Tier 1, five in Tier 2 and three in Tier 3. The funding for all projects amounted to \$481,815.00 USD. A separate funding recommendation of \$13,200 USD was made for project publications. This was approved by the Education Committee and subject to decision by the Executive Committee.
6. SSREAG members had a breakout session where they separated into their different sub-groups. Members discussed initiatives to improve the SSR Grant Program. Suggestions for improvement included: extracting publication fees from the budget and making it available upon submission of a Final Report, utilizing an experienced French researcher and localizing research and collaboration in French speaking Africa to significantly increase applications and research coming from this region. Other initiatives to improve the application process of the SSR Grant Program were proposed, including providing more robust reviewer feedback, and importantly, clearly sharing this information with the research team for future potential re-submission. Other suggestions were having a Call for Proposals for external peer reviewers to validate their candidature, engaging potential partnerships by having regional SSR symposiums to discuss challenges, collaboration, and dissemination of research, and adding an additional third day to the Global Education Conference (GEC) for SSR to allow the discussion and promotion of clean sport on a global scale and acknowledge leading early-career investigators. Additionally, members elaborated on the importance of the Principal Investigator applying shall hold a PhD.
7. SSREAG members were presented with a detailed overview of WADA's SSR Commissioned Projects in order to generate ideas for items WADA may need to consider.
 - a. **Prevalence Program:** The doping prevalence index looks at different sources of information that triangulates into four elements; Doping Control Tests (AAF), Prevalence Survey (NEW), Prevalence estimation from ABP data, and Anti-Doping Rule Violations (ADRVs). The Prevalence Program is currently conducting scientific research to identify a baseline for doping level.
 - b. **Inadvertent Doping:** A governance structure is being developed with FRQ. The SSREAG will be seen as a group to provide advice. A taskforce approach will be established, where experts are identified to look at five different work packages: Definition, Measure, Prevalence, Protection, Prevention.
 - c. **ADO Research Package:** Is measuring the effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation of Anti-Doping and Education Programs through knowledge, constructs/proxies, clean sport

behaviors, and doping behaviors. The Research Package has currently developed survey items for three different population groups: Adolescent Athletes, Elite Adult Athletes, and Athlete Support Personnel. The next phase is to validate the questionnaire. By the end of the year WADA will have a package with three questionnaires that may be shared with our Stakeholders.

- d. **Clean Sport Academies:** The Clean Sport Academies project is currently on hold for 2023. The objective is to have a hub for clean sport research (SSR) in various regions. Important considerations for this year are; structure, governance, operational framework, funding model, selection criteria.
 - e. **SSR Collaboration Platform:** Publishing the results of a stakeholder survey as well as the microsite in Q2. The SSREAG was presented with some results of the survey such as of 361 respondents, 81% are engaged in SSR, 50% conduct SSR and lastly, 31% proclaim barriers to funding.
8. SSREAG members discussed integrating SSR at the next Global Education Conference (GEC) in France, 2024. Two considerations were discussed. Firstly, the representation of SSR in the two-day conference. Secondly, having a call for poster presentations. The outcome of the discussion involved including a third day (conditionally upon attending the GEC) after the conference for SSR that would allow early-career researchers to converse with experienced researchers. Session examples for the third day are: anti-doping priorities, successes of collaboration, and community building. A concept of having a “new investigator” award was discussed to encourage SSR anti-doping researchers.
 9. SSREAG members discussed emerging research topics for the SSR Grant Program. Some examples are gender in sport, nutritional supplements, esports and Artificial Intelligence.
 10. A joint meeting of the SSREAG and the Education Committee was held on the morning of 29 March 2023. The meeting started with an overview of the 2023 SSR Grant Program launched 17 October 2022. The Education Committee welcomed the robust review process undertaken by the SSREAG and external reviewers. Rob Donovan, Chair of the SSREAG presented the projects recommended for funding. The Education Committee endorsed the recommendations made by the SSREAG to fund a total of 9 recommended research projects for a budget of 481,815.00 USD. The Education Committee supported the mandate of the Chair to present the recommendations to the WADA Executive Committee for final approval at their May 2023 meeting. The SSREAG and Education Committee members acknowledge there are fewer women researchers in anti-doping overall and raised the point that four out of the nine principal investigators for potential funding are women.
 11. The meeting concluded following a discussion between the Education Committee and SSREAG on SSR priorities and areas of interest that will be discussed further by both groups in future meetings. Chair of the Education Committee, Kady Kanoute thanked the SSREAG for their commitment and diligence in reviewing the applications and promoting the SSR Grant Program.