TERMS OF REFERENCE (TOR)
NDDCB Research Grants Programme – 2026

1. Background

The National Dangerous Drugs Control Board (NDDCB) is the principal national institution mandated to coordinate drug demand reduction, prevention, treatment, research, and policy development in Sri Lanka. In line with its evidence-based policy mandate, NDDCB intends to strengthen national programme planning through targeted, high-quality research addressing priority gaps in drug prevention and treatment.

Accordingly, NDDCB invites competitive research proposals for three (03) selected priority research themes, with the objective of generating actionable evidence for national-level planning, innovation, and implementation.

2. Purpose of the Research Grants

The purpose of this grant programme is to:

- Generate policy-relevant, evidence-based findings
- Strengthen national drug prevention and treatment strategies
- Identify gaps, challenges, and opportunities for innovative programme design
- Support decision-making at national and sub-national levels

These grants are NOT intended for academic qualification purposes (undergraduate, postgraduate, or doctoral requirements).

3. Priority Research Areas

Applicants must submit proposals under ONLY ONE of the following themes:

Research Area I: Effectiveness of Current Drug Prevention Initiatives

- Assessment of effectiveness, quality of the content, coverage, and equity
- Identification of gaps, duplication, and underserved populations
- Analysis of implementation challenges and best practices

Research Area II: Health-related Physical and Mental Comorbidities among Drug-dependent Persons

- Physical and mental health comorbidities
- Drug use patterns and associated risk behaviours
- Implications for treatment models and service integration

Research Area III: Factors Associated with Relapse and Relapse Prevention Strategies among Drug-dependent Persons

- Assessment and analysis of factors associated with relapse, including individual, social, environmental, treatment-related, and systemic determinants influencing relapse among drug-dependent persons.
- Examination of relapse patterns and timelines, including high-risk periods following treatment completion, community reintegration, and transitions between treatment and aftercare services.
- Identification and evaluation of existing relapse prevention practices and interventions, both formal and informal, implemented within treatment centres, community-based programmes, and follow-up mechanisms.
- Assessment of protective factors and resilience mechanisms that contribute to sustained recovery and reduced risk of relapse.
- Identification of gaps and challenges in current relapse prevention approaches, including service coverage, continuity of care, family and community support, and multi-sector coordination.
- Development of evidence-based, context-specific relapse prevention strategies, with practical recommendations tailored to Sri Lanka's national drug treatment and rehabilitation system.
- Proposal of best-practice and innovative relapse prevention models that can be integrated into national treatment, aftercare, and community-based programmes, with clear implications for policy and programme improvement.

4. Scope of Work

The selected research teams shall:

I. Design and implement a scientifically sound research methodology that is appropriate to the selected research theme and aligned with methodologically accepted research standards, ensuring validity, reliability, and transparency of findings.

II. Ensure national coverage of the research, either through:
- Islandwide data collection OR
- The use of a scientifically justified, representative sample that adequately reflects geographic, demographic, and sectoral diversity across Sri Lanka.

III. Clearly justify the sampling framework, including:
- Selection criteria for districts, institutions, communities, or populations
- Sample size determination and representativeness
- Inclusion of high-risk, underserved, or priority areas where relevant

IV. Apply triangulation methods by systematically integrating:
- Primary data (e.g., surveys, interviews, focus group discussions, observations)
- Secondary data (e.g., administrative data, programme records, existing national datasets provided by NDDCB or other authorized sources)

V.   Conduct ethical data collection and analysis, strictly adhering to:
- Approved ethical clearance conditions
- Confidentiality, anonymity, and informed consent
- Do-No-Harm principles, particularly when engaging vulnerable populations

VI.   Ensure analytical rigor, including:
- Appropriate qualitative and/or quantitative analytical techniques
- Cross-validation of findings across data sources
- Contextual interpretation relevant to Sri Lanka's drug control landscape

VII.   Develop practical, policy-oriented recommendations that are:
- Actionable and evidence-based
- Directly linked to national drug prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation programmes
- Suitable for informing planning, resource allocation, and programme innovation

VIII.   Submit all agreed deliverables within the stipulated timeline, including inception, draft, and final reports, in accordance with NDDCB reporting formats and deadlines. NDDCB may support:
- Access to selected existing datasets
- Information on hotspots, service structures, and national trends (Subject to confidentiality and approval)

5. Eligibility Criteria

Eligible Applicants

- Recognized research institutions
- Universities and higher education institutions
- Academic staff attached to universities
- Research organizations registered under academic or statutory bodies

Not Eligible

- Undergraduate students
- Postgraduate students (Master's / PhD candidates)
- Research conducted for academic credit or degree fulfillment

6. Research Team Requirements

Principal Investigator (PI)

- Minimum Postgraduate qualification (Master's or above) in a relevant discipline
- Minimum 5 years of research experience

- Demonstrated experience in drug-related, public health, social science, or policy research
- Availability to complete the research within the stipulated timeline

Co-researchers

- Relevant academic or professional qualifications
- Clearly defined roles and responsibilities
- CVs of All team members must be submitted.

7. Ethical Considerations

Ethical clearance from a recognized ethics review committee is mandatory

- Adherence to Do No Harm principles
- Protection of participants, institutions, and communities
- No damage to institutional or national reputation
- Special safeguards for vulnerable populations

8. Data Ownership, Confidentiality, and Dissemination

- All data, datasets, and final reports shall remain the property of NDDCB
- Researchers may not publish, present, or disseminate findings without written approval from NDDCB
- All information shall be treated as strictly confidential
- Findings will be utilized for national programme planning and implementation

9. Deliverables
- Detailed Research Protocol
- Draft research report
- Final research report (policy-oriented, actionable)
- Executive summary and policy briefs (if requested)

10. Timeline

Research commencement: Upon signing the MOU

Final report submission deadline: 10 December 2026

No extensions will be granted except under exceptional circumstances approved by NDDCB

11. Payment Structure

Payments will be released in two instalments:

First instalment – Upon signing the MOU and approval of the Detailed Research Protocol

Final instalment – Upon submission and acceptance of the final report both in English and Sinhala (by 10th December)

12. Selection Process

- Proposals will be reviewed by an independent evaluation panel
- Competitive scoring based on relevance, methodology, feasibility, and impact
- NDDCB reserves the right to accept or reject any proposal without obligation to provide justification

13. Award and Contracting

Selected applicants will be formally notified

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) will be signed

Research must strictly adhere to conditions prescribed by NDDCB

14. Required Supplementary Documents

I.   Completed application form
II.   Detailed research proposal
III.   Work plan and timeline
IV.   Budget breakdown
V.   CVs of all team members
VI.   Institutional registration documents
VII.   Signed declaration forms