

# Experiments in research funding: lessons from partial randomisation

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The **Research on Research Institute** is an international consortium of funders, universities and technologists, who conduct transformative, translational, co-produced research to improve the way research is funded, practiced, communicated and evaluated.

## Background

Is research funding allocated in the most effective way? Is the process fair to all applicants? What procedures could be changed in order to improve the system and allow for greater parity for applicants, greater efficiency for funding bodies, and more diverse and beneficial research for society at large? Across the globe, there is growing interest in using experimental approaches for funding research, such as 'lottery-type' mechanisms, but we lack sufficient understanding of how effective these are and in which context they are applicable. What are the affordances and constraints organisations experience when planning and implementing these interventions? In the Randomisation project, researchers and RoRI partners running experiments in grant allocation worked together to develop the evidence surrounding these questions. This comprised a qualitative interview study across 6 funding agencies and 6 countries in addition to a practical handbook, drawing on first hand experience of trialing new interventions in research funding practice.

## What is partial randomisation?



## Project outputs

### Funder motivations

**Fairness:** assisting decision making and diversity, meeting legal requirements

**The grey zone:** eliminating deadlock and overcoming unhelpful group dynamics

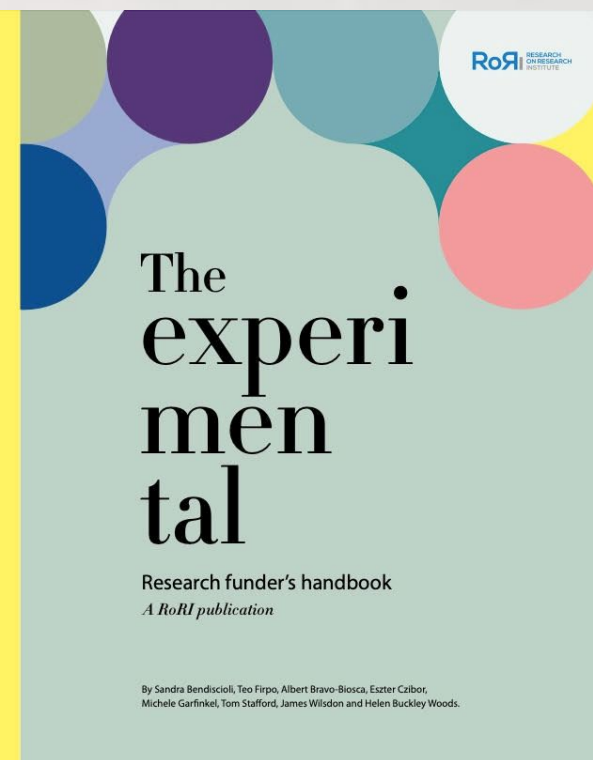
**Disciplinary spread:** overcoming bias to creative research, overlooked fields and 'cold' topics



**Innovation:** allied to values, a 'nice to have' by-product, a debatable point  
**Efficiency:** Little certainty of cost savings, time savings appear negligible

### The experimental research funder's handbook

A practical resource for funding organisations who seek to experiment with new methods in research funding allocation. Part one presents tools that funding organisations can use to address the challenges they face and experiment with funding processes. Examples of how to use these tools to diagnose a problem, and design and evaluate an intervention are also provided.



In part two, the handbook focuses on partial randomisation and provides first hand, in-depth accounts from funding organisations within RoRI who have trialed new approaches to funding allocation.

## Next steps

Funding organisations are keen to collaborate with each other and to share experiences of their experimental work to build the evidence base. RoRI will provide an opportunity for funding professionals to share learning through a peer network. In addition we have launched a Funder Lab, to support and facilitate larger scale robust experimental studies, to allow comparison across funding systems.

