

MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

# Technical Advisory Panel Guidelines

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For MnDOT and LRRB Research Projects



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This document was developed to provide Technical Advisory Panel members with information and resources to properly and effectively execute contracts administered through MnDOT Research Services & Library for MnDOT and the Local Road Research Board. These TAP guidelines are incorporated by reference into all university research work order contracts.

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## I. General Project Management and Philosophy of the TAP

When a project is selected for funding, a Technical Advisory Panel (TAP) is established for the project to provide technical assistance and to monitor the administration of the contract. The process by which research is conducted for MnDOT and the Local Road Research Board encourages open dialog between the members of the TAP. This allows for a free exchange of ideas between the TAP members and is an important factor in creating research results that can be successfully implemented.

A TAP meeting may be initiated either by the Principal Investigator (PI), the Technical Liaison (TL) or the Project Coordinator (PC). TAPs usually meet to discuss progress, when tasks are due and to review deliverables. In some situations, it may be beneficial for the TAP to meet more frequently, such as quarterly or monthly, as appropriate based upon the project scope.

**Figure 1: TAP Member Roles at a Glance**

Member	Responsibilities
<b>Technical Liaison (TL)</b>	The TAP member who represents the sponsoring organization's interests and who provides technical expertise that influences the scope of the work performed during the contract. The Technical Liaison (TL) provides guidance during the development of the work plan, provides technical comments during reviews, and approves the work plan, amendment requests and contract deliverables. The TL can also set up TAP meetings and/or work with the Project Coordinator (PC) to set up TAP meetings as requested. Such decisions are made on a case-by-case basis and after discussion with the PC.
<b>Principal Investigator (PI)</b>	The contractor/researcher who is responsible for project development and for the completion of the contract obligations. With TAP guidance and input, the Principal Investigator (PI) designs, develops and performs tasks to carry out the contract deliverables.
<b>Project Advisors (PA)</b>	The MnDOT Research Services & Library (RS&L) representative who facilitates project startup and provides a link between the TAP and other related efforts occurring within the LRRB, MnDOT and national programs. The Project Advisor (PA) may or may not be a TAP member. Responsible for all pre-contracting steps for projects and entering potential benefits and implementation information in ARTS.
<b>Project Coordinator (PC)</b>	The MnDOT Research Services & Library (RS&L) representative who provides organizational support including monitoring of contract schedule, budget and funding program implications. They provide guidance during the contract for actions required to follow contractual procedures and serve as the link between the TAP and MnDOT RS&L's finance unit. The PC may also set up TAP meetings in consultation with the Technical Liaison (TL).
<b>Additional Panel Members</b>	Other TAP members who provide additional technical assistance, review deliverables and represent the interests of agency practitioners, beneficiaries or stakeholders in transportation research.

Member	Responsibilities
<b>Friends of the TAP</b>	Stakeholders who may attend TAP meetings to stay informed of the project progress, but who do not have influence on project scope or task approvals. These may include industry representatives or the general public.

## II. Summary of TAP Members' Responsibilities

A TAP generally consists of:

- a Principal Investigator (PI), who performs the research;
- a Technical Liaison (TL), who represents the agency's interests;
- a Project Coordinator (PC), who represents MnDOT's contractual obligations; and
- other panel members, who represent the interests of agency practitioners, beneficiaries or stakeholders in transportation research; and
- optionally, "friends of the TAP," who have a desire to stay informed of the project's progress and discovery.

### A. Technical Liaison (TL)

The TAP member who represents the sponsoring organization's interest and who provides technical expertise that influences the scope of the work performed during the contract. They provide guidance during the development of the work plan, provide technical comments during reviews, and approve the work plan, amendment requests and contract deliverables.

Responsibilities include:

- Help develop the research need statement prior to project funding.
- Review multiple proposals submitted on the research need statement, if required.
- Collaborate with the Principal Investigator (PI) and Project Advisor (PA)/Project Coordinator (PC) on the development of the project work plan, and assist with its final approval.
- Recruit and select other TAP members.
- Coordinate MnDOT assistance (work, data, permits, etc.) for the Principal Investigator (PI).
- Communicate work progress with Project Advisor (PA) and Project Coordinator (PC).
- Can initiate TAP meetings. This role is decided on a case-by-case basis and in consultation with the Project Coordinator (PC). The TL and the PC can mutually decide who will take lead in setting up TAP meetings.
- Lead TAP meetings.
- Provide technical expertise to the project.

- Document project details as appropriate.
- Review all draft and final deliverables in a timely manner.
- Summarize the TAP's comments on each draft deliverable and submit comments to the Principal Investigator (PI) and the Project Coordinator (PC). Approve final deliverables.
- Review and recommend approval of contract amendments.
- Complete the online professional technical contract performance evaluation, which will be sent to you by the Project Coordinator at the end of the contract. Additional information can be found at [mndot.gov/consult](http://mndot.gov/consult).

## **B. Principal Investigator (PI)**

The contractor/researcher who is responsible for performing the tasks necessary to complete a research project per the obligations documented in a Work Order Agreement under the terms of an approved research organization's Master Contract, or in a consultant contract with the State of Minnesota.

The PI is under a contractual agreement to perform the tasks listed in the work order, according to the agreed-to project time constraints (deadlines).

Responsibilities include:

- Provide timely notification to the Technical Liaison (TL) and the Project Coordinator (PC) of any matter which may affect contractual obligations.
- Develop a realistic schedule in a work plan and maintain the project schedule as outlined in the contract. There are several reasons for projects to be delayed, including and not limited to issues revolving around the universities' educational purpose. However, as much as practicable, MnDOT needs the PI to adhere to the schedule, as funds are encumbered for contracts based on what is budgeted per fiscal year. If appropriate communication and action does not take place when task deadlines are not met, funding may be lost.
- Develop and provide contract task deliverables for approval. The PI will provide draft deliverables for TAP review and final deliverables for Technical Liaison (TL) approval.
- Request amendments in a timely manner. Contract amendments require administrative time at universities and at MnDOT. Please allow six weeks to process amendment requests; under state law, MnDOT cannot pay for activities not under contract. If a contract expires, a Stop Work Order is issued, and **must be abided until the contract is amended and an extension is issued. If a contract is expired for 60 days, a new contract is needed.**
- Universities with master contracts should submit a [travel authorization request](#) to MnDOT at least two weeks prior to anticipated out-of-state travel. MnDOT will reimburse out-of-state travel costs for the purpose identified and for the amount budgeted in the

fully executed contract. Generally, travel should be conducted toward the completion of the project, to promote the findings and facilitate implementation.

- Provide project progress reports on a quarterly basis (March 31, June 30, September 30 and December 30). For University of Minnesota projects, use the University of Minnesota's Center for Transportation Studies (CTS) online reporting system. All other PIs should send their quarterly reports to the PC and the TL.
- Become familiar with the current [report publishing guidelines](#) and other requirements for final deliverables.
- For projects with a report as a task deliverable, submit approved report to CTS (including non-UMN projects), who coordinates editorial review of all approved reports for publishing. **Allow for two months for the editorial review and completion of the final published report prior to the contract expiration date.**
- Frequently communicate with the Technical Liaison (TL) and Project Coordinator (PC) regarding schedule to assist in scheduling TAP meetings.
- Develop and e-mail TAP meeting notes. MnDOT encourages the PI to delegate this responsibility to graduate students. Meeting notes may consist of a PowerPoint or other contract deliverable, and a bulleted list of action items resulting from the meeting.
- Communicate work progress with the Technical Liaison (TL).
- Can initiate TAP meetings, if needed.
- At the end of the project, complete a contract performance evaluation, which will be sent to you by Consultant Services at the end of the contract. Additional information can be found at [mn.dot.gov/consult](http://mn.dot.gov/consult).

### C. Project Advisor (PA)

The MnDOT Research Services & Library (RS&L) representative who facilitates project startup and provides a link between the TAP and other related efforts occurring within the LRRB, MnDOT and national programs.

Responsibilities include:

- Collect research and implementation ideas.
- Coordinate the completion of research need statement forms and literature reviews.
- Coordinate proposal reviews and funding notifications.
- Facilitate TAP formation, pre-contract TAP meetings and work plan reviews through final approval.
- Enter potential project benefits and implementation opportunities in ARTS.
- Responsible for all pre-contract work plan development steps and finalization processes.
- Monitor the contract approval.

- Approve all contract amendments for scope change, and address any approval processes required by funding programs to assure timely amendment processes.
- Serve on the TAP, if necessary.
- Identify implementation strategies prior to initiating research projects.
- Schedule and conduct pre-TAP meetings, take meeting minutes, and file.
- Enter all pertinent project information including TAP members in ARTS.

#### **D. Project Coordinator (PC)**

The MnDOT Research Services & Library (RS&L) representative who provides organizational support, including monitoring of contract schedule, budget and funding program implications. They provide guidance during the contract for actions required to follow contractual procedures and are the link between the TAP and MnDOT RS&L's finance unit.

Responsibilities include:

- After contract approval, assume project management responsibilities and coordinate all activities.
- Work with the Project Advisor (PA) for changes in the work plan scope. Obtain PA's approval for revision of project scope and excessive time amendments to a work plan before proceeding for contracting.
- At the first TAP meeting after contract execution, outline the research process and review the roles and responsibilities of TAP members.
- Maintain the official project file, tasks deliverable, etc., in the Automated Research Tracking System (ARTS) database.
- Communicate work progress with Project Advisor (PA) and Technical Liaison (TL).
- Can initiate TAP meetings. This role is decided on a case-by-case basis and in consultation with the Technical Liaison (TL). The TL and the PC can mutually decide who will take lead in setting up TAP meetings.
- Schedule TAP meetings, as necessary, to meet the project needs as directed by the Technical Liaison (TL) and Principal Investigator (PI).
- Ensure that TAP meetings are scheduled and project stays on track. Work with the Technical Liaison (TL) on this task.
- Take responsibility to keep everyone informed on the project status, progress made and ensure issues are addressed.
- Obtain approval from Technical Liaison (TL) for deliverable approval forms and amendment requests.
- Monitor project for contract compliance, particularly schedule and budget, and provide guidance during the contract for actions required to follow contractual procedures.

- Document implementation activities for the project.
- Send the contract performance evaluation to the Technical Liaison (TL) and assist with any questions they may have (more info at [mndot.gov/consult](http://mndot.gov/consult)). Help with other project close-out evaluations as needed.
- Consult with the Project Advisor (PA) and university/consultant representative with concerns or problems, keeping the MnDOT research management engineer (i.e. the MnDOT Research Services & Library research unit supervisor) informed as necessary.
- Provide assistance with implementation of research results.

### **E. Additional Panel Members**

The other TAP members who provide additional technical assistance, review deliverables and represent the interests of agency practitioners, beneficiaries or stakeholders in transportation research.

Responsibilities include:

- Attend and participate in TAP Meetings.
- Become familiar with the project contract.
- Provide technical support as needed.
- Provide user perspective and technical guidance to the project.
- Review and provide comments on task deliverables to the Technical Liaison (TL).
- Provide assistance with implementation of research results.

### **F. Friends of the TAP**

The stakeholders who may attend TAP meetings to stay informed of project progress, but who do not have influence on project scope or task approvals.