



Technical Advisory Panel Guidelines

For Minnesota Department of Transportation and Minnesota Local Road Research Board Research Projects

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Contents

- Technical Advisory Panel Guidelines1
- Contents2
- Introduction.....3
- Research Project Roles3
- Principal Investigator Responsibilities.....3
- Purpose of Technical Advisory Panel (TAP)4
- TAP Member Roles4
- Technical Liaison (TL).....4
- Principal Investigator (PI)5
- Project Advisor (PA).....5
- Project Coordinator (PC)6
- Additional Panel Members7
- Friends of the TAP7

Upon request, this material will be made available in an alternative format such as large print, Braille or audio recording.

Introduction

This document serves as a guide for research project Technical Liaisons (TL) and Technical Advisory Panels (TAP). TLs and TAPs serve an important role in the MnDOT research process and their expertise ensure research is impactful and rigorous. These guidelines are specific to research projects sponsored by the MnDOT Research Steering Committee and the Local Road Research Board and administered by MnDOT Research & Innovation.

Research Project Roles

Each research project includes a Principal Investigator (PI), a TL, TAP, Project Advisor (PA), and Project Coordinator (PC). Each role is described in detail below.

Principal Investigator Responsibilities

- Provide timely notification to the Technical Liaison (TL) and the Project Coordinator (PC) of any matter which may affect contractual obligations.
- Develop a work plan that includes overall description of research approach, detailed tasks and corresponding task deliverables, project schedule, and a detailed budget.
- Develop and provide contracted draft task deliverables to the TL for TAP review.
- Address TAP comments and revisions to task deliverables.
- Provide final report within the current report publishing guidelines and other requirements for final deliverables.
- When necessary, and with approval of the TL and PC amendments in a timely manner.
- PIs from a university with a Master Contract
 - 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 two months prior to the contract expiration date for the editorial review and completion of the final published report.

- Frequently communicate with the Technical Liaison (TL) and Project Coordinator (PC) regarding the project schedule to assist in scheduling TAP meetings.
- 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.

Purpose of Technical Advisory Panel (TAP)

Each research project requires a Technical Advisory Panel (TAP) to provide technical assistance and monitor the rigor and value of the contract deliverables. TAP members and TLs should have open dialog and exchange of ideas.

TAP Member Roles

A TAP generally consists of:

- a Technical Liaison (TL), who represents the sponsoring organization's interests and serves as the final decision-maker and approver of work performed;
- a Project Advisor (PA), who helps with the initial development of the project and may continue to advise as needed.
- a Project Coordinator (PC), who represents MnDOT's contractual obligations and ensures the project stays on track;
- panel members, who provide additional technical assistance, review deliverables and represent the interests of their organization practitioners, beneficiaries or stakeholders in transportation research;
- optional "friends of the TAP," who desire to stay informed of the project's progress and discovery.

Technical Liaison (TL)

The Technical Liaison (TL) represents the sponsoring organization's interest and is the lead technical expert overseeing the project. The TL guides the development of the work plan, is the final reviewer on technical comments, and approves the work plan, amendment requests, invoices 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).
- Provide technical expertise to the project.
- Lead TAP meetings.
- Initiate TAP meetings, if needed. 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.
- Document project details as appropriate. (Most project management tasks will be handled by the Project Coordinator.)
- 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.
- Be interviewed for and help review the publication of a technical summary at the conclusion of the project.
- Complete the online professional technical contract performance evaluation, which will be sent to the TL by the Project Coordinator at the end of the contract. Additional information can be found at mndot.gov/consult.

Principal Investigator (PI)

With TAP guidance and input, the Principal Investigator (PI) designs, develops and performs research project tasks. The PI must meet project deadlines and follow the work order agreement of the approved research organization's Master Contract, or consultant contract with the State of Minnesota.

Project Advisor (PA)

The Project Advisor (PA) is the MnDOT Office of Research & Innovation representative who facilitates the development of the research project and is responsible for all pre-contracting steps. The PA provides a link between the TAP and other related efforts within the LRRB, MnDOT and national programs. The Project Advisor (PA) may or may not be a TAP member.

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 the Automated Research Tracking System (ARTS) database.
- Ensure all pre-contract work plan development steps and finalization processes are completed.
- 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.

Project Coordinator (PC)

The Project Coordinator is the MnDOT Office of Research & Innovation staff member who is responsible for project management activities on behalf of the sponsoring organization, and ensures that work performed complies with the contract schedule, budget and contracted deliverables.

Once a contract is fully executed, Project Coordinator responsibilities include:

- Schedule, facilitate, and record the project kick-off meeting and outline the research process and review the roles and responsibilities of TAP members.
- In collaboration with the TL, manage project schedule, budget, and deliverables (scope)
- Maintain the official project file, task deliverables, etc., in ARTS.
- Obtain TL approval for contract deliverables and invoices.
- Schedule, facilitate, and record the project TAP meetings.
- Communicate work progress with Project Advisor (PA) and Technical Liaison (TL).
- 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.
- Take meeting minutes, keep everyone informed of project status and progress, and ensure issues are addressed.
- Send the contract performance evaluation to the Technical Liaison (TL) and assist with any questions they may have (more info at 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. MnDOT's Office of Research & Innovation Research Supervisor) informed as necessary.
- Provide assistance with implementation of research results.

Additional Panel Members

Other TAP members 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.

Friends of the TAP

Other stakeholders, called “friends of the TAP,” may attend TAP meetings to stay informed of the project progress, but do not have influence on project scope or task approvals. These may include industry representatives or the general public.