Mn/DOT Research Services Section
Technical Advisory Panel (TAP) Guidelines

The following was developed to provide the TAP with the information and tools necessary for the proper and effective conduct of contract research for Mn/DOT and the Local Road Research Board. These TAP Guidelines are incorporated by reference into all University of Minnesota research work order contracts.

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TAP GUIDELINES

I. *General Project Management – The TAP*

The process by which research is conducted for Mn/DOT encourages open dialog between the Principal Investigator (PI) and the members of the Technical Advisory Panel (TAP). This open dialog allows for a free exchange of ideas between the researcher and the TAP members and is an important factor in creating research results that can be implemented by Mn/DOT and the LRRB State Aid system.

When a project is selected for funding, a TAP is established for the project to provide technical assistance and to monitor the administration of the contract and the research project. A TAP meeting may be initiated either by the PI, the Technical Liaison (TL), or the Administrative Liaison (AL), and usually meets when they agree that it is important to discuss progress; often when tasks are due to review deliverables. In some situations, it may be beneficial for the TAP to meet more often, such as quarterly or monthly, as appropriate based upon the project scope.

TAP Member Roles at a Glance

Principal Investigator (PI)	Technical Liaison (TL)	Administrative Liaison (AL)	Additional Panel Members
The researcher who is responsible for the execution of the project. With TAP guidance and input, they design and develop deliverables, perform key tasks to carry out the project, and report on the research project.	Provide technical expertise and advice during the project and represent the sponsoring organization's interests. They provide input during the development of the work plan, provide technical comments during reviews, and approve the work plan, amendment requests and contract deliverables.	Provide organizational project support including facilitation of the project, documentation of activities, status and reporting protocols, and assurance of contract compliance. ALs facilitate the flow of information between TAP, Mn/DOT, funding entities and other stakeholders and resolve conflicts. They are the link between the TAP and Mn/DOT RSS finance department.	*Panel Members* provide technical assistance, review deliverables and represent the interests of agency practitioners, beneficiaries or stakeholders in transportation research.
			Roadmap Managers are assigned to facilitate project startup and provide a link between the project and the Mn/DOT and LRRB research programs.

II. *TAP Member's Responsibilities*

The research TAP consists of a PI performing the research, a TL representing the agency's interest, an AL representing Mn/DOT's contractual obligations, and additional Panel Members representing agency practitioners', beneficiaries', or stakeholders' interests in transportation research.

SPECIFIC RESPONSIBILITIES

A. Principal Investigator (PI)

The PI is under contract with the State of Minnesota, through Mn/DOT or LRRB, to design, perform, and document the research project with TAP guidance and input. Specific tasks required of the PI include:

1. Provide timely notification to the TL and the AL of any matter which may affect contractual obligations.

2. 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, Mn/DOT needs the PI to maintain the schedule as funds allocated for research are budgeted for that purpose per calendar year and expire. Thus research funds not spent in a calendar year are lost to research, resulting in Mn/DOT RSS using future research funds to finish an expiring research project.*

3. Develop and provide contract task deliverables for approval according to the TAP guidelines.
   - *The PI will provide a draft deliverable for TAP reviews and a final deliverable as approved by the TL.*
   - *The AL is required to maintain the official project file for state audit purposes.*

4. Request amendments in a timely manner.
   - *Contract amendments require administrative time at universities and at Mn/DOT. Please allow 6 weeks to process amendment requests; under state law, Mn/DOT cannot pay for activities not under contract. If a contract expires, a Stop Work Order is issued by the Financial Services Section of Mn/DOT's Research Services Section, and must be abided until the contract is amended and an extension is issued.*

5. Submit *Request for Mn/DOT Travel Authorization Form* to Mn/DOT at least 2 weeks prior to anticipated travel. *(See Appendix A)*

- *Mn/DOT will reimburse out-of state travel costs for the purpose identified and for the amount budgeted in the fully executed contract work order.*

6. Provide project progress reports on a quarterly basis (March 31, June 30, September 30 and December 30)
   - For non-UMN research, please send to the AL for distribution. Otherwise, use the University of Minnesota's Center for Transportation Studies (CTS) On-line reporting system.

7. Be familiar with the current Electronic Publishing Guidelines *(Appendix B)* and Software Deliverable Guidelines *(Appendix C)* for final deliverable requirements.

8. Submit draft final report to CTS which coordinates technical and editorial review of all draft final deliverables.

   - *All Mn/DOT and LRRB sponsored work plans require four months for technical and editorial review.*

9. Communicate schedule with AL, TL and TAP to assist in scheduling TAP meetings.

10. Develop and e-mail TAP meeting notes.
    - *Mn/DOT 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.*

B. Technical Liaison (TL)

The TL is relied on by Mn/DOT to provide leadership and technical expertise and advice throughout the course of the project. For the research projects, they are the technical project managers, and represent the sponsoring organization's interests. Specific tasks required of the TL include:

1. Assist with development of the project work plan and its final approval.

2. Coordinate Mn/DOT assistance for the PI.

3. Assist with the recruiting and selection of TAP members.

4. Provide technical expertise to the project.

5. Review and recommend approval of any contractual changes to Research Services Section (RSS).

6. Schedule and conduct TAP meetings following the appropriate agenda or appropriate milestones.

7. Record meeting notes for the TL's use.
   - *The AL will provide a form for the TL to use, if requested.*

8. Review all draft deliverables.

9. Summarize the TAPs comments on each draft deliverable, utilizing the electronic Deliverable Approval Form *(Appendix D), and submit comments to the PI and the AL.*

10. Provide Report Dissemination Categories.

11. Complete and submit the Consultant Performance Evaluation form and the Report on Professional/Technical Contracts form.

C. Administrative Liaison (AL)

The AL provides contract support for the project; including facilitation of the project documentation of activities and contract compliance. Specific tasks of the AL include:

1. Provide contract administrative activities for the project. Including: maintaining the official project file, tasks deliverable, etc.

2. Sign off on work plan, invoicing (DAFs) and all amendments.

3. Outline the research process and review the roles and responsibilities of TAP members.

4. Monitor projects for contract compliance.

5. Maintain project status updates in Automated Research Tracking System (ARTS) database in a timely manner, and record AL meeting notes.

6. Coordinate with the TL for Task Approvals using the Deliverable Approval Form.
   - *The PI will provide a draft deliverable for TAP reviews and a final deliverable as approved by the TL.*
   - *The AL is required to maintain the official project file for state audit purposes.*

7. Document implementation activities for the roadmap managers.

8. Provide TL with the necessary contract evaluation and reporting forms.

9. Consult with Mn/DOT Research Manager and University/consultant representative with concerns or problems.

D. Additional Panel Members

Technical Advisory Panel (TAP) members are usually individuals employed by Mn/DOT, local governments, FHWA, or state agencies who have technical knowledge or special interest in the subject area of the research project. TAP members are key to implementing the results of the research. Specific tasks of TAP members include:

1. Attend and participate at the TAP Meetings.

2. Become familiar with the project work plan.

3. Provide user perspective and technical guidance to the project.

4. Review and provide comments on task deliverables to the TL.

5. Review draft final report and provide technical comments to the TL.

6. Provide assistance with implementation of research results.

E. Roadmap Managers

Roadmap Managers are assigned to facilitate project startup and provide a link between the project and the Mn/DOT and LRRB research programs. Specific Roadmapper tasks include:

1. Coordinate research Needs Statements.

2. Coordinate research proposal review and funding award notices.

3. Facilitate TAP formation, pre-contract TAP meeting and work plan reviews through final approval.

4. Identify implementation strategies prior to initiating research projects.

F. Others Involved with Mn/DOT Research Management

There are other functional Mn/DOT research services staff members who may be involved with each research project. Their information may be found at the Mn/DOT Research website "Staff" page.