



# Technical Advisory Panel Roles & Responsibilities

## MnDOT and LRRB Research Programs

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

## Technical Advisory Panel Overview

Every research project funded by the Minnesota department of Transportation (MnDOT) or the Minnesota Local Road Research Board (LRRB) is guided by a Technical Advisory Panel (TAP). TAPs maximize the impact of research by advising the research project scope and tasks, offering diverse perspectives, providing technical assistance, and reviewing project deliverables.

This guide outlines the roles and responsibilities of TAP members.

## TAP Member Roles

TAP member roles include:

- **Principal Investigator (PI):** Designs, develops and performs research project tasks.
- **Technical Liaison (TL):** Represents the sponsoring organization's interests and serves as the final decision-maker and approver of work performed.
- **Project Advisor (PA):** Helps with the initial development of the project and may continue to advise as needed.
- **Project Coordinator (PC):** Represents MnDOT's contractual obligations and ensures the project stays on track.
- **Panel Members:** Provide additional technical assistance, review deliverables and represent the interests of their organization's practitioners, beneficiaries or stakeholders in transportation research.
- **Friends of the TAP:** Desire to stay informed of the project's progress and discovery.

## TAP Member Responsibilities

### Principal Investigator (PI)

With TAP guidance and input, the 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.

*Responsibilities may include:*

#### **Beginning of Project**

- **Work Plan:** Develop a work plan that includes overall description of research approach, detailed tasks and corresponding task deliverables, project schedule, and a detailed budget.

#### **During Project**



- Contract: Provide timely notification to the TL and the project coordinator of any matter which may affect contractual obligations. If necessary, submit [contract amendment requests](#) with approval from the TL and PC.
- Communication: Communicate with the TL and project coordinator regarding the project progress and to assist in scheduling TAP meetings.
- Progress Reports: 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.
- Deliverables: Provide draft task deliverables to the TL for TAP for review. Appropriately address comments and revisions.
- Travel: Universities with master contracts should submit a [travel authorization request](#) to MnDOT at least two weeks prior to anticipated out-of-state travel.

### **End of Project**

- Final Deliverables: Follow [publishing process](#) for final report deliverables. Provide final report within the current report publishing guidelines and other requirements for final deliverables.
- Editorial Review: 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.
- Be interviewed for and help review the publication of a technical summary at the conclusion of the project.
- Performance Evaluation: Complete the online professional technical contract performance evaluation, which will be sent to the PI at the end of the contract. Additional information can be found at [www.dot.state.mn.us/consult/consultantcorner.html](http://www.dot.state.mn.us/consult/consultantcorner.html).
- Assist with sharing project findings.

### **Technical Liaison (TL)**

As the chair of the advisory panel, the Technical Liaison (TL) represents the sponsoring organization's interest and oversees the project. The TL may also be the lead technical expert on 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 may include:*

### **Beginning of Project**

- Help develop the research need statement prior to project funding.
- With assistance from MnDOT's Research Management Unit, review multiple proposals submitted on the research need statement, if required.

- Collaborate with the PI, PA and PC on the development of the project work plan and assist with its final approval.
- Recruit and select other TAP members.
  - It is permissible for Technical Liaisons to invite key experts to serve on the TAP for only the portion of the project that applies to their expertise.

### **During Project**

- Coordinate MnDOT and/or LRRB assistance (work, test sites, data, permits, etc.) for the PI.
- Communicate work progress with PA and PC.
- Provide technical expertise to the project.
- Review and recommend approval of contract amendments.
- Initiate TAP meetings if needed. This role is decided on a case-by-case basis and in consultation with the PC. The TL and the PC can mutually decide who will take lead in setting up TAP meetings.
- Lead TAP meetings.\*
- Review all draft and final deliverables in a timely manner.
- Once submitted by the PI, forward draft and final deliverables to the TAP for comments.\*
- Summarize the TAP's comments on each draft deliverable and submit comments to the PI and the PC.\*
- Approve final deliverables.

### **End of Project**

- 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 PC at the end of the contract. Additional information can be found at [mndot.gov/consult](http://mndot.gov/consult).
- Assist with sharing project findings.

\* The PC is available to assist with or lead these activities.

## **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 PA is available for advising throughout the project and may or may not be a TAP member.

*Responsibilities may include:*

### **Beginning of Project**

- Research Solicitation: 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.
- 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.\*

### **During Project**

- Enter potential project benefits and implementation opportunities in the project management database.

\* The PC is available to assist with or lead these activities

### **Project Coordinator (PC)**

The PC 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.

*Responsibilities may include:*

#### **Beginning of Project**

- Support the PA throughout the research solicitation process, during work plan development and also the pre-contract TAP meeting.
- Work with the TL to schedule, facilitate, and record the project kick-off meeting and also outline the research process and review the roles and responsibilities of TAP members.

#### **During Project**

- In collaboration with the TL, manage project scope, schedule, budget, and deliverables.
- Maintain the official project file, task deliverables, etc.
- Schedule, facilitate, and record the project TAP meetings.
- Communicate work progress with PA and TL.
- Work with the 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.

- Develop and maintain research project communication plan.
- Consult with the PA and university/consultant representative with concerns or problems.

### **End of Project**

- Obtain TL approval for final contract deliverables and invoices.
- Update research strategic alignment and outcomes as needed.
- Send the contract performance evaluation to the 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.
- Aid 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 may include:*

### **Beginning of Project**

- Assist in the development of the project work plan.
- Become familiar with the project contract.

### **During Project**

- Attend and participate in TAP Meetings.
  - TAP Members, on average, can expect to attend four to six TAP meetings over the course of one to three years.
    - Pre-contract meeting (work plan development).
    - Project kickoff meeting (starting research activities).
    - Interim meetings (as needed).
    - Final project meeting (discuss the final report and implementation opportunities).
- Assist in developing and refining a project communication plan to share project findings and results.
- Provide technical support as needed.
- Provide user perspective and technical guidance to the project.
- Review deliverables and provide comments on task deliverables to the TL.
  - The number of task deliverables varies by project but TAP members can expect to review several deliverables over the course of one to three years.
    - Initial memorandum of expected research benefits and potential implementation steps.
    - Interim task deliverables.

- Final memorandum of research benefits and implementation steps.
- Draft of the final report.

### **End of Project**

- Aid with implementation of research results.

### **Benefits include:**

- Networking with other practitioners.
- Becoming more familiar with the MnDOT and LRRB transportation research programs.
- Guiding and contributing to cutting-edge research.
- Growing in your field of interest.
- Building your resume.
- Participating in research that benefits and improves Minnesota transportation.

In the event that TAP members are unable to continue to serve on the panel, they are asked to notify the TL and the PC and may be asked to nominate a replacement TAP member.

### **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.