



**WEST VIRGINIA  
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION  
DIVISION OF HIGHWAYS**

**PROCESS FOR RESEARCH SERVICES  
SOLICITATION, SELECTION, AND CONTRACT  
IMPLEMENTATION**

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## **PREFACE**

The West Virginia Department of Transportation (WVDOT) Research Program seeks to identify West Virginia's current and future transportation-related needs and develop practical, effective, and economical solutions through research and innovation. The research program is managed by the Research and Special Studies Section (RSS), which is housed under the Division of Highways, Program Planning and Administration Division. The RSS can use multiple sources for completing research projects, ranging from establishing WVDOT "in-house" research teams to publically soliciting research services from other public or private agencies and institutions, such as universities and colleges, University Transportation Centers (UTC), consulting firms, construction companies, and other entities.

This document describes the solicitation, selection, and contract implementation process that the RSS follows when it opts to publically solicit researches services. It is intended to be used as an informational guide for persons from public or private agencies and institutions pursuing a research services contract with the West Virginia Department of Transportation, Division of Highways.

For questions on the information provided in this document, or the research program in general, please contact:

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<http://www.transportation.wv.gov/highways/programplanning/research>

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## **1. Introduction**

The West Virginia Department of Transportation (WVDOT) strives to produce a more safe, efficient, and economical transportation system for the traveling public. The WVDOT seeks to identify West Virginia's current and future transportation-related needs and develop innovative, progressive, and economical solutions through its research program. Research is conducted to better understand why a certain problem occurs and to how prevent or correct the problem through new and improved design concepts; materials; construction and maintenance technologies and practices; information technology systems; etc. Research can produce cost-effective solutions through the development of more sustainable design and construction practices and the maximization of resources.

The WVDOT research program is managed by the Research and Special Studies Section (RSS), which is housed under the Division of Highways, Program Planning and Administration Division. The RSS is responsible for soliciting and evaluating problem statements for potential research; working with WVDOT Management in making the final selection of research projects for each fiscal year; managing state and federal research funds and the procurement of research services; overseeing all Federal and State funded research projects; selecting and assembling research teams; dissemination of the research findings through reports and presentations, and overseeing the implementation of research results.

The RSS can employ different means for completing research projects, ranging from establishing WVDOT "in-house" research teams to publically soliciting research services from other public or private agencies and institutions, such as universities and colleges, University Transportation Centers (UTC), consulting firms, construction companies, and other entities. The purpose of this document is to describe the process that follows when the RSS chooses to publically solicit researches services. A description of typical research project teams and their respective roles in a research project is first provided in Section 2. Descriptions of the solicitation process and selection process then follows in Section 3 and 4, respectively. Finally, a description of the research services contract implementation process is provided in Section 5.

## **2. Research Project Teams**

Two teams are typically established for each research project – the project management team and the research team. The RSS has established specific titles and roles for the members of these teams, each of which are described in this section.

### **❖ Project Management Team**

An RSS Project Coordinator (PC), with the assistance of a WVDOT Project Monitor (PM) and a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), manages and oversees each research project from development of the Request for Proposal (RFP) through to the dissemination and implementation of the research project results. A brief summary of their roles in the research process are provided below.

- **Project Coordinator (PC)** – an employee RSS employee that provides comprehensive oversight of research projects and is responsible for managing research projects through:
  - developing and distributing RFP's;
  - establishing and directing the TAC;
  - reviewing proposals;
  - providing leadership and tracking progress of the project;
  - preparing official correspondence between the TAC, RSS, and the research team Principal Investigator (PI);
  - evaluating time extension requests;
  - receiving and distributing deliverables; and
  - developing implementation plans when applicable.
  
- **Project Monitor (PM)** – responsible for overseeing the technical aspects of the research project and serves as a liaison between the Principal Investigator (PI) and the RSS Section. PM's are typically employees of the WVDOT. PM's report to, and are overseen by, the PC. Some additional responsibilities of the PM include:
  - assisting in data collection from WVDOT sources;
  - involving outside agencies in the research process;
  - reviewing revisions and requests for time extensions;
  - overseeing project deliverable acceptance and approval;
  - taking leadership to ensure the project is completed according to the RFP; and
  - assisting in the implementing of research findings.
  
- **Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)** – provides technical expertise and support from development to completion of the research project. The TAC is comprised of WVDOT employees and may also include Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) representatives, consultants, construction contractors, and other research subject matter professionals.

#### ❖ **Research Team**

The research team performs the research services (or work) scoped in the RFP. When the RSS opts to solicit the research services from a public or private agency, the signatory of the research services contract with the WVDOT is referred to as the Contractor. The research team representing the Contractor typically consists of a Principal Investigator (PI) and any number of Researchers under the direction of the PI. The number of Researchers on a research team is a function of the scope of the research project. For example, small research projects may only require one Researcher to complete the work; in such a case the Researcher would be the PI. The Contractor may also sub-contract research services from other agencies such consultants and contractors. The responsibilities of the Contractor and the research team are summarized below.

- **Contractor** – the public or private agency (e.g. universities/colleges, UTC’s, consulting firms, construction companies, etc.) responsible for governing the research team for the duration of the contract. The Contractor is also responsible for maintaining all records, data, and reports pertaining to the research project for which they have signed a contractual agreement.
- **Researcher** – representatives the Contractor assigned to a research team to perform tasks associated with completing the scoped work of the research services contract. Researchers may include, but are not limited to, college and university faculty, staff and students, engineers, technicians, consultants, construction contractors, or other subject matter specialists.
- **Principal Investigator (PI)** – the Researcher selected by the Contractor to lead the research team. Responsibilities of the PI include:
  - coordination, preparation, management, and technical reporting of proposals and other submission materials;
  - proper fiscal and ethical management of the project;
  - ensuring the research work is properly budgeted and scoped prior to initiation of the project contract; and
  - ensuring work performed by the researchers is accurate, professional, and delivered per the contractual dates.

Each research project must have a designated PI; only one Researcher can be designated by the Contractor as the PI. The PI shall submit the proposal to the RSS and will be the primary point of contact for all communication with the RSS and WVDOT concerning the research project throughout its duration. In accordance with the RFP instructions, the research team members and their qualifications are to be listed in the corresponding research project proposal. Multiple research teams under the same Contractor may compete for the same research project. For example, multiple faculty members from the same college or university often compete for the same research project.

### 3. Research Services Solicitation Process

When the RSS chooses to publically solicit research services from private and public agencies, a Request for Proposal (RFP) advertisement process is followed. The RFP notice will be disseminated by the following means to allow interested parties the opportunity to compete for the research project:

- Publication in both the Charleston Gazette and Charleston Daily Mail newspapers once a week for at least two successive weeks. The advertisement will be published only on a weekday during this period.
- Posting online at [www.transportation.wv.gov/highways/programplanning/research](http://www.transportation.wv.gov/highways/programplanning/research).
- Email distribution to applicable department chairpersons at universities and research institutions within West Virginia for dissemination to faculty and staff.
- Email distribution to other organizations, such as engineering societies, upon their request, that may desire to disseminate the information to their members.

- Email distribution to researchers from academic institutions, consultants, and or contractors that have already expressed an interest in the research project.

A Proposal Solicitation Schedule is included in the RFP and the public advertisement; the schedule typically includes an Information Request Deadline, Information Response Deadline, and a Proposal Submission Deadline. A one (1) week information request period is typically provided following the end of the solicitation period. The information request period ends at the Information Request deadline. Questions on the RFP must be sent from the research team PI to the PC by email prior to this deadline. The PC is generally allowed one (1) week to respond to inquiries. A response will be sent to the PI by email prior to the Information Response Deadline. A Q&A list and any RFP modifications will also be posted on the RSS Section website prior to the Information Response Deadline. No additional RFP revisions will be made after this Information Response Deadline. It is the responsibility of all PI's to monitor the RSS website for any RFP revisions or additional instructions as no other means of notification will be used to disseminate this information. The research team PI is responsible for submitting their proposal prior to the Proposal Submission Deadline. PI's are generally given four (4) weeks from the end of the Information Response Deadline to submit a proposal.

#### **4. Research Team Selection Process**

When the RSS publically solicits research services it uses a competitive-based process for selecting the research team. The selection is based solely on the rating (or scoring) of the proposal received by the RSS. It is important to note that neither a presentation nor an interview is part of the selection process. The RSS follows a standard, systematic process to ensure consistency and objectivity in the selection of the research team. A review committee is established by the RSS to evaluate the proposals received for a research project. The review committee typically includes, but is not limited to, the PC, PM, and the TAC. *Proposals received after the deadline stated in the RFP will not be forwarded for review.*

The PC distributes the proposals to each review committee member. A Proposal Review Form is used by each member to rate the submitted proposals. The Proposal Review Form (see **Exhibit 1**) provides a standard, consistent format for proposal evaluation. Proposal reviews, as outlined on the Proposal Review Form, should answer the following questions:

- 1) Does the proposal meet the objectives of the project with the researcher having a working understanding of the problem?
- 2) Do the tasks listed in the proposal contain an adequate level of explanation and detail?
- 3) Does the work plan have sufficient detail and practical steps for implementation?
- 4) Has the research staff demonstrated an adequate level of experience in the area of research to perform the work?
- 5) Are the facilities and equipment sufficient to meet the needs of the project?
- 6) Does the total estimated cost for the research seem reasonable for the amount of work required?



**West Virginia Department of Transportation**  
 Division of Highways · Research and Special Studies  
**Proposal Review Form**  
**For FY 20\_\_ Research Program**

RP#: \_\_\_\_\_ Review Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Title of Proposal: \_\_\_\_\_

Category: \_\_\_\_\_

Proposal Submitted By: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Reviewer: \_\_\_\_\_

Position: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

For review area numbers 1 - 6 listed below, please assign points based on the following

- 0 - Not Covered    1 - Very Poor    2 - Poor  
 3 - Average        4 - Above Average    5 - Excellent

*(Fill in shaded area below)*

AREA OF REVIEW	WEIGHT OF AREA	POINTS GIVEN	WEIGHTED POINTS
1) Does the proposal meet the objectives of the project with the researcher having a working understanding of the problem?	25		
2) Do the tasks listed in the proposal contain an adequate level of explanation and detail?	25		
3) Does the work plan have sufficient detail and practical steps for implementation?	15		
4) Has the research staff demonstrated an adequate level of experience in the area of research to perform the work?	15		
5) Are the facilities and equipment sufficient to meet the needs of the project?	10		
6) Does the total estimated cost for the research seem reasonable for the amount of work required?	10		
<b>SUB TOTAL:</b>			

For review area #7, please assign -50 to +50 discretionary points and/or deductions if warranted:

7) Discretionary Points and/or Deductions. [-50 to +50 points] <i>(Provide an explanation below for the discretionary points/deductions.)</i>		
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<b>TOTAL POINTS:</b>	
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*(Sum of review areas 1 - 7)*

**Explanation for the discretionary points and/or deductions given:**

**Exhibit 1: Proposal Review Form**

On the Proposal Review Form, each review area is weighted based on importance. To complete the form, a point value is assigned for each area of review. The point values range from zero (0) indicating that the area is not addressed, to five (5) indicating that the area is well addressed in the proposal. The weight is multiplied by the points given for each area to get the total points for each review area. The total points for each area of review are summed to give the total points for the proposal. Additionally, discretionary points may be awarded or deducted, up to fifty (50) points, provided that a description is given to justify why the extra points were added or subtracted from the proposal. Note that the Proposal Review Form can be modified for specific proposals.

The review committee members forward their proposal review forms to the PC when they complete the scoring of each proposal. For each proposal, the PC enters the ratings of each review committee member into a Proposal Review Committee Evaluation Summary form (see **Exhibit 2**). A composite score is computed for each proposal and shown on the Proposal Review Committee Evaluation Summary form. The composite score is computed by dividing the summation of the total points per reviewer by the total number of reviewers. The research team PI that submitted the proposal with the highest composite score is selected to proceed with the negotiation of a research contract agreement between the Contractor and the WVDOT. In the event of a tie in proposal rankings, the review committee will hold a special meeting to review and discuss the proposals and make their final selection.

Once the selection process is complete, the proposal review committee makes a final review of the chosen proposal to determine if any modifications are necessary before entering the contract negotiation phase. If necessary, a review committee meeting is scheduled to discuss the proposal and finalize comments. If no revisions to the original proposal are necessary, the PC sends a letter to the selected PI stating that (s)he has been chosen for contract negotiations. If proposal revisions are required, a summary of the review comments and a written revision request are sent to the PI. A meeting may also be requested by the PI or PC to discuss the needed revisions. This iterative process continues until a revised proposal is approved by the review committee. A letter is sent to all research team PIs whose proposals were not selected, informing them that they were not chosen for the research services.

## **5. Research Services Contract Implementation Process**

After the proposal for the research project is approved, an agreement is drafted by the RSS Section and sent to the Contractor for review and signature. Upon return from the Contractor, the signed agreements are sent to the WVDOT Legal Division, which forwards the signed agreements to the Commissioner of Highways. When both copies of the agreement have been signed by the Contractor and the Commissioner of Highways (or his/her designee), the contract is considered fully executed; a Notice to Proceed is sent to the Contractor with one (1) original copy of the signed agreement. The other signed agreement is sent to the WVDOT's Legal Division. Copies of the signed agreement are sent to the RSS Section Head and the Program Planning and Administration Division's Services Manager, who is responsible for the distribution of the project funds.



West Virginia Department of Transportation  
 Division of Highways · Research and Special Studies  
 For FY 20\_\_ Research Program

**Proposal Review Committee Evaluation Summary**

Proposal RP #:  Composite Score:

Proposal Title:

Submitted By:

AREA OF REVIEW	POINTS GIVEN BY EACH EVALUATOR												
	Eval. A	Eval. B	Eval. C	Eval. D	Eval. E	Eval. F	Eval. G	Eval. H	Eval. I	Eval. J	Eval. K	Eval. L	
1) Does the proposal meet the objectives of the project with the researcher having a working understanding of the problem?													
2) Do the tasks listed in the proposal contain an adequate level of explanation and detail?													
3) Does the work plan have sufficient detail and practical steps for implementation?													
4) Has the research staff demonstrated an adequate level of experience in the area of research to perform the work?													
5) Are the facilities and equipment sufficient to meet the needs of the project?													
6) Does the total estimated cost for the research seem reasonable for the amount of work required?													
7) Discretionary Points and/or Deductions.													
<b>TOTAL POINTS PER EVALUATOR:</b>													

**Exhibit 2: Proposal Review Committee Evaluation Summary Form**