



## **OPERATING PROCEDURES**

**Revised on July 20, 2023**

### **Pooled Fund Project TPF-5(479), Test and Evaluation of Materials, Equipment and Methods for Winter Highway Maintenance**

The Clear Roads pooled fund research group was established in 2004 to carry out rigorous testing of winter maintenance materials, equipment, and methods, for use by highway maintenance crews. This document outlines the administrative makeup and practices of the pooled fund, which consists of one (1) Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) representative from each of the member agencies. Close collaboration with the Federal Highway Administration and other related research organizations is also a crucial component of a successful pooled fund effort. Updated information on projects, membership, and activities can be found on the Clear Roads website: [www.clearroads.org](http://www.clearroads.org).

All contracts for Clear Roads research and other activities are administered by the lead state and must comply with their regulations, policies, and procedures. The pooled fund was renewed in August 2021 with the new number, TPF-5(479) with the Minnesota DOT still as the lead agency. In this role, Minnesota DOT is responsible for contracting with research investigators and handling payment of invoices. Another agency may fulfill this role upon agreement by the TAC and the FHWA.

#### **Leadership**

The Technical Advisory Committee shall elect one of its members to serve as the Chairman. The Chair's duties will be to coordinate with the Administrator to develop an agenda for both face-to-face meetings and to lead the discussion during those meetings. A Vice-Chair shall also be elected. The Vice-Chair shall serve as the Chairman in the Chair's absence. The suggested term for these leadership positions is two years. The TAC may remove or elect a new Chair or Vice Chair as needed.

#### **Membership**

Clear Roads membership is limited to state DOTs. Each state DOT, that has made at least the minimum annual commitment to Clear Roads of \$25,000, may appoint a technical expert to serve as a member of the TAC and represent the agency's interests. In-kind commitments are not accepted to achieve membership in Clear Roads.

To maintain member status (including paid travel expenses and voting privileges) at the spring meeting, the organization must be paid up through the previous year. For example, membership for continuing partners at the spring 2024 meeting requires payment of FY 2023 funds. If a state

falls behind in its contribution, then it is up to the Clear Roads Chair to grant permission for the state to attend.

To maintain member status at the fall meeting, the organization must have committed funds for the current calendar year prior to the meeting and must have plans to transfer those funds to the lead state agency before the year ends. For example, an agency must officially commit funding for FFY 2024 on the TPF Web site by September 2024 to participate as a member at the fall meeting.

Although membership in Clear Roads is limited to state DOTs, Clear Roads reserves the right to invite other non-member states or government organizations (foreign or domestic) to either of their meetings. These invitations need to be approved in advance by the TAC.

### Member Roles and Responsibilities

TAC members participate in project-related meetings and briefings on matters needing full membership resolution, and as subcommittee members on individual projects. The role of the TAC will include the following responsibilities and others that the TAC decides are appropriate:

- Participate in face-to-face meetings.
- Develop and vote on research proposals for funding each year.
- Vote on Clear Roads matters involving research project selection, ad hoc funding requests, and operating procedures.
- Volunteer on the subcommittees for selected projects. (Subcommittees typically consist of 5 to 7 members.)
- Approve project subcommittee members.
- Review and approve project scopes developed by the subcommittees before advertising.
- Provide input on the best-qualified investigators to conduct projects.
- Provide guidance on implementation activities.

### Subcommittee Responsibilities:

- Participate in the evaluation and selection of the best-qualified investigators to conduct projects.
- Develop Scope of Work for projects.
- Work with the Administrator to ensure the Principal Investigator satisfactorily revises the project work plan prior to contracting.
- Participate in progress meetings with the administrator and investigators.
- Review project progress reports and annual reports.
- Approve project deliverables and final reports.
- Other duties as determined by the TAC.
- May designate non-Clear Roads members to serve in an advisory role on subcommittees.

### **Administration**

The Clear Roads pooled fund will contract with an Administrator to support the efforts of the Technical Advisory Committee and the research conducted through the pooled fund. Below is a summary of the Administrator's functions:

1. Serve as primary contact for the project with the Transportation Pooled Fund Program and its sponsors (FHWA, TRB, and AASHTO), partner organizations, TAC members, prospective and selected investigators, and others.
2. Assist the lead state to post the project solicitation to the TPF Web site, monitor partner commitments, request FHWA approval for use of 100 percent SP&R funds and assure obligation forms are received by FHWA from partners.
3. Establish and maintain regular communication with TAC members via e-mail, phone, and meetings.
4. Schedule and coordinate meetings of the TAC.
5. Prepare and distribute meeting agendas, minutes, and other materials needed to conduct Committee business.
6. Disseminate RFPs for individual research projects; receive, review, and distribute proposals to TAC members.
7. Facilitate issuance of investigator contracts through the lead state agency's standard purchasing processes, including communication with the lead state agency's purchasing personnel and prospective investigators.
8. Track and report on (via posting to Clear Roads and TPF web sites) all aspects of ongoing research projects based on investigator quarterly reports and other milestones.
9. Receive and coordinate review, approval, and payment of reimbursement requests from investigators and Technical Advisory Committee members.
10. Receive and distribute (via Web posting and other means as needed) interim and final research reports and other deliverables.
11. Track and report on implementation activities related to completed research.
12. Conduct research syntheses for the TAC based on needs identified at the spring and fall face-to-face meetings.
13. Support other Technical Advisory Committee activities as needed.

## **Voting Procedures**

Each TAC representative from the member agencies will have voting privileges on Clear Roads matters involving research project selection, ad hoc funding, or operating procedures. Each member agency may have no more than one voting representative. Formal votes are not necessary on all issues. The TAC may establish an accepted consensus through meeting discussions, phone calls, e-mail exchanges, and other electronic means.

For research project selection and other matters requiring a more formal approach, votes may be cast by voice, a show of hands, or a written proxy. Any voting member may request a roll call vote if desired. To ensure that the diversity of the member agencies is being represented, consensus decisions require majority agreement of at least two-thirds of the members. Without a quorum of two-thirds of the members, members who are absent from the meeting will be polled. Decisions will be delayed until all members have had sufficient opportunity to respond.

## **Annual TAC Meeting Calendar**

The calendar below represents the tentative timing and content of the Clear Roads Technical Advisory Committee meetings and research project milestones. The TAC may meet more frequently, either in person or by virtual meeting, to review and approve research project interim

deliverables or to hold joint meetings with other winter maintenance research organizations. The location of face-to-face meetings will vary to best accommodate members from around the country and to keep costs down.

<b>Jan/Feb/March</b>	<b>Submit new proposal ideas to Administrator</b>
<b>April</b>	<b>Spring face-to-face TAC meeting (3<sup>rd</sup> week of April)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss new project proposals, select projects to fund, and identify project subcommittee members.</li> <li>• Review and select synthesis projects to fund.</li> <li>• Plan for year's activities.</li> <li>• Select location of future meetings.</li> <li>• Review progress of current research projects.</li> <li>• Present state and industry reports.</li> <li>• Report on recently completed projects.</li> </ul>
<b>April/May/June</b>	<b>Conference calls with project subcommittees</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Subcommittees discuss and draft scopes of work for new projects.</li> <li>• TAC reviews the scopes developed by the subcommittees (scopes will be posted to the members only portion of Clear Roads website).</li> <li>• Submit scopes of work to MnDOT as requisitions.</li> </ul>
<b>July</b>	<b>Post RFPs for new research projects</b>
<b>September</b>	<b>Responses to RFPs due</b>
<b>September</b>	<b>Fall face-to-face TAC meeting (3<sup>rd</sup> week of September)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Subcommittees present all proposals received for each project and the full TAC provides input for the subcommittee to consider in their evaluations.</li> <li>• Review and select synthesis projects to fund.</li> <li>• Review progress of current research projects.</li> <li>• Discuss next steps for new projects.</li> <li>• Select locations for future meetings.</li> <li>• Present state and industry reports.</li> <li>• Review completed projects for implementation and technology transfer activities.</li> <li>• Report out on recently completed projects.</li> <li>• Select project development teams.</li> </ul>

<b>September/October</b>	<b>Project subcommittees review and score the technical proposals.</b>
<b>November/December</b>	<b>Award contracts, finalize work plans.</b>
<b>January/February</b>	<b>Project kickoff meetings with subcommittees and research teams.</b> • New projects get underway

## **Research Project Lifecycle**

The primary goal of the Clear Roads pooled fund group is to fund and oversee research projects and technology transfer activities that advance the field of winter highway operations. To achieve this objective, TAC members will work closely together to identify and prioritize needs, develop and review project problem statements, disseminate Requests for Proposals, select research investigators, oversee the research projects, and promote implementation of research results.

Below are the steps taken to propose, rank, and select projects to be funded on the annual Clear Roads research project lifecycle:

### Proposing and Selecting Research Projects

Prior to the annual TAC meeting in April:

1. Research Development Teams (5 teams of 7 + members) will meet virtually to discuss and develop research problem statements to be submitted for consideration by the TAC at the spring meeting. The Administrator will facilitate this process. The intent is for each team to develop and submit 3 to 5 problem statements.

At the annual TAC meeting in April:

1. TAC members present and discuss their research proposals. Additional project ideas may emerge during these discussions and are recorded for consideration.
2. TAC members complete a preliminary project ranking based on a scale of 1 (no need) to 5 (absolute need). An average score is tallied for each project. These rankings serve to eliminate from consideration projects that are not supported by the majority. The highest scoring projects are further discussed.
3. TAC members make a final selection of projects to fund. Selected projects should address the objectives of Clear Roads, focus on implementation opportunities, represent the variety of interests of the member organizations, and be financially possible within the constraints of the pooled fund budgets.
4. Project co-champions and a project subcommittee will be assigned to each project that is selected. The project subcommittee will consist of 5 to 7 members, although exceptions to those limits may be determined on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of the TAC. The champions will work with the project subcommittee and the Administrator to develop a Request for Proposal and will serve as the primary contact throughout the project lifecycle.

5. Projects may emerge that would lend themselves to joint funding with other research organizations. TAC members will discuss appropriate steps for pursuing such projects.

#### Developing and Posting Requests for Proposals

1. The Administrator will conduct a brief literature search for selected projects as needed to identify existing identical or complimentary research.
2. The Administrator will work with the project champions and project subcommittees to draft scopes of work (that will become RFPs) for the selected research projects.
3. The entire TAC will review and provide input on project scopes prior to posting RFPs.
4. Using requisition forms, RFPs will conform to the standards established by the pooled fund's lead state agency.
5. TAC members may submit lists of potential investigators for the research projects.
6. The Administrator will work closely with the lead agency to finalize the RFPs, distribute them to the TAC's list of researchers, and to post the RFPs on all appropriate websites.
7. RFPs will allow a minimum of 30 days for contractor response. A longer period of 45 days is preferable.

#### Awarding Contracts

1. Contracts shall be awarded in accordance with the rules of the lead state agency.
2. The TAC will meet in-person (or virtually) to review and discuss the responses to all RFPs.
3. The project subcommittees score the proposals on behalf of the TAC. If the project subcommittee decides it is necessary, they can request interviews and / or presentations by proposers. RFP scoring will be documented per the lead state's guidelines.
4. Upon selection of the research investigators by the lead state, the Administrator will work with the lead state's purchasing unit to notify the contractor of the award and develop the contract. The project champion and the project subcommittee will assist in final review and approval of the work plan and budget prior to signing the contract and to monitor the progress of the project.

#### Overseeing the Research

1. Each research investigator must submit quarterly reports for review by the TAC and posting on the Clear Roads web site.
2. Investigators will also be expected to provide interim and final deliverables and to participate in virtual meetings with the TAC regarding the project progress and results. Specific deliverables and meetings will be defined in each project work plan.
3. The Administrator, project champions, and project subcommittee will provide primary project oversight and technical support. However, the entire Technical Advisory Committee will be involved in final presentation meetings.

The Lead Agency Administrative Contact will coordinate approval of investigator invoices with the Lead Agency Technical Contact.

## **Implementation**

During development of the project scopes, the project subcommittees will endeavor to seek out opportunities for implementation and will ask proposers to submit implementation plans as appropriate.

Every year in January, an implementation survey will be distributed to the TAC to document implementation activities related to all Clear Roads completed projects.

## **Matching Funds**

Due to the significant burden on the member states to research and confirm that no conflicts exist, Clear Roads will not provide documentation of matching funds to researchers for their University Transportation Center grants or any other grant programs.

## **Travel Expenses**

### TAC Members

Travel expenses for Technical Advisory Committee members related to participation in Clear Roads activities will be paid out of the pooled fund unless stated otherwise for the individual project. Such expenses include airfare, car rental, mileage, meals, lodging, etc. Most travel expenses will relate to Clear Roads TAC meeting participation. However, at the TAC's discretion, travel expenses associated with attending related meetings or activities will also be reimbursed. The Administrator is responsible for working with the lead state to coordinate events that minimize travel costs.

Each member organization of Clear Roads will be permitted to send one representative from their organization to each Clear Roads face-to-face meeting. Exceptions to this rule include:

- A state is transitioning from one technical representative to another. In this case, two representatives may attend, although Clear Roads will only pay for one.
- The state DOT hosting the face-to-face meeting. In this case, the host state may allow up to 6 additional people to attend as observers at any given time during the meeting.
- The Lead State Agency, which may send two attendees to each meeting (one technical voting representative and one administrative representative).

TAC members must track their own expenses and submit a request for reimbursement to the lead state, following their guidelines for reimbursement.

### Program Administrator

Travel expenses for the pooled fund Administrator will be reimbursed by the pooled fund.

### Investigators

Investigators should include costs for travel related to Clear Roads research in their project budgets. Expenses incurred for travel related to presenting a proposal response are the responsibility of the investigators or submitting organizations.

### Non-voting Partners

The following non-Members are invited to attend the Clear Roads face-to-face meetings or to participate in virtual meetings. These participants will not be allowed to vote or bid on projects but can attend meetings and receive documents. These non-voting participants include:

#### *FHWA Representatives*

Meal expenses incurred while participating in a group Clear Roads event such as a group lunch, dinner, or break item are covered. Other travel and lodging expenses are not covered.

#### *Potential TAC Members*

Are invited to attend a single meeting to get familiar with the program before becoming a full member. All reasonable travel expenses incurred will be reimbursed, following the same reimbursement policies as for TAC members.

#### *Additional Member State Representatives*

Full expenses will be reimbursed for only one representative for each member agency. However, meal expenses incurred while participating in a group Clear Roads event will be covered for additional representatives. Other meal, travel and lodging costs would not be reimbursed, unless approved by the TAC. All attendance and reimbursement must be approved by the TAC prior to the event.

#### *Other Clear Roads Partners and Invited Guests (such as APWA, SICOP, NPRA, LTAP, industry stakeholders)*

Meal expenses incurred while participating in a group Clear Roads event such as a group lunch, dinner, or break item are covered. Other travel and lodging expenses are not covered.

#### *Clear Roads Chemist*

A chemist from one of the member states is a vital contributor to the discussion of several Clear Roads projects. A chemist is invited to attend both the spring and fall face-to-face meetings. Expenses related to travel to these meetings are covered in the same manner as a traditional member state representative.