

## Required Format for Iowa DOT Research Proposals

The following instructions are intended to help researchers prepare a proposal that will be acceptable for review by the research staff. Where differences occur between information stated in this document and what is posted on <https://iowadot.gov/research/Requests-for-Proposal>, the information posted on the website will govern.

The research proposal should be prepared in a manner that defines the research problem and objectives, provides a detailed work plan for achieving the objectives, and indicates how the research findings are expected to be used. Proposals should provide a straightforward description of the researcher's ability to meet the stated objectives.

A Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) will be assembled by the project Principal Investigator (PI) and the Iowa DOT research staff prior to the start of each project. The project TAC will meet with the project PI(s) at:

- Project kick-off
- Quarterly or at an appropriate interval determined by the TAC
- Project closing

### I. Cover Page

- a. Include the following information:
  - i. Proposal title (Maximum 7 words or from RFP)
  - ii. Research proposal number (from RFP)
  - iii. "Submitted to [PROJECT MANAGER NAME],  
Iowa Department of Transportation  
Research and Analytics  
800 Lincoln Way, Ames, Iowa 50010"

### II. Summary Page

- a. Include the following information:
  - i. "Submitted by" name, institution, address, e-mail address, phone and ORCID (<https://orcid.org/>) of proposer
  - ii. Abstract (Maximum 300 words)
  - iii. Project Cost
  - iv. Proposal date
  - v. Project length (in months, **do not use dates**)
  - vi. Keywords (from Transportation Research Thesaurus - [https://trt.trb.org/trt\\_alphabet.asp](https://trt.trb.org/trt_alphabet.asp))
    1. TRT Help Video - <https://vimeo.com/496881977>

### III. Table of Contents

- a. On a separate page, list the proposal's sections and page numbers.

#### **IV. Problem Statement**

- a. Concisely express your understanding of the problem presented in the RFP. Do not simply repeat the wording of the RFP, but rather demonstrate your own insight into the problem.

#### **V. Background Summary**

- a. Include background information on the research topic. An online literature search of both of Transportation Research Board's *Research in Progress* (<https://rip.trb.org/>) and *Transportation Research Integrated Database* (<https://trid.trb.org/>) records is also encouraged.
- b. Summarize these findings and state the relationship of the proposed study to prior research. The summary should reveal your understanding of underlying principles and should clearly express your appreciation of the problem.
- c. The importance of the background summary should not be underestimated. A comprehensive summary ensures that all aspects of the research topic have been adequately considered so new research can build upon prior work rather than duplicate it.

#### **VI. Objectives**

- a. State each of the study's technical objectives as cited in the RFP and indicate any additional objectives the proposing team will define for the project.
- b. Describe how each objective will be accomplished during the research. Any deviations from the objectives listed in the RFP must be explained and justified.

#### **VII. Research Plan**

- a. Describe how the objectives will be achieved through a logical and innovative plan. State each task proposed, and if listed in the RFP, also include tasks as cited in the RFP.
- b. Describe in appropriate detail how each task will be performed and how each task contributes to accomplishing the study's stated objectives. Any deviations from tasks listed in the RFP must be explained and justified.
- c. The plan should also describe the technical basis of the research. Describe the following, as appropriate:
  - i. Principles or theories to be used
  - ii. Significant variables to be tested
  - iii. Analytical and statistical procedures
  - iv. Experimental and testing procedures
  - v. Evaluation criteria
  - vi. Inspection and survey methods
  - vii. Controls to be used
  - viii. Material or procedure development

- d. The plan should be complete, providing the greatest level of detail that the researcher's understanding of the problem permits.
- e. Describe the facilities available to accomplish the research. Indicate equipment necessary to completion of the research and specify any restrictions on its use. Specify any equipment that is necessary but not currently on hand. If additional equipment is to be purchased with project funds, identify it in the budget estimate.

## **VIII. Products**

- a. List the products that will be delivered during the research project, which may include:
  - i. Reports
  - ii. Computer programs
  - iii. Manuals
  - iv. Physical models
  - v. Photographs
  - vi. Databases
  - vii. Video or other audio/visual materials
- b. Unless directed otherwise in the RFP, always include the following items as products:
  - i. Quarterly progress reports to the TAC
    - 1. Schedule, submission details and the QPR form itself are available at <https://iowadot.gov/research/Research-Process/Contracting-Project-Management>.
  - ii. Draft final report
  - iii. Final report
  - iv. Technology Transfer Technical Brief
    - 1. All Technology Transfer Technical Briefs shall comply with Section 508 requirements, regardless of funding source. Section 508 is an amendment to the United States Workforce Rehabilitation Act of 1973 mandating that all electronic and information technology developed, procured, maintained, or used by the federal government be accessible to people with disabilities. Refer to 29 U.S.C 794 (d) for additional information.
- c. Electronic copies (in PDF format) of the Final Report and Technology Transfer Technical Briefs are required unless permission is specifically granted otherwise.

## **IX. Implementation/Technology Transfer**

- a. Describe how (in general) Iowa cities, counties, or the Iowa DOT can apply the anticipated research results to improve their practice. If responding to a pooled fund RFP, frame in terms of pooled fund partner states instead.

- i. Describe the form in which the research findings may be reported, such as a mathematical model, a laboratory test procedure, or a design technique. Describe these results in terms of the practicing engineer or administrator.
  - ii. State who would logically be responsible for applying the research results, such as the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO), the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Iowa cities and counties, the Iowa DOT or specific bureaus within Iowa DOT.
  - iii. Identify specific standards or practices that might be affected by the research findings, such as AASHTO or Iowa DOT specifications, policies and procedures, legislation, and funding or staffing requirements.
  - iv. Identify institutional issues, including resource requirements, administrative rules, or laws, that might need to be addressed for successful implementation.
- b. If findings will not be suitable for immediate implementation, indicate what further work might be necessary.
  - c. The PI, under the guidance of the TAC, will ensure that the final report has an implementation section that specifically meets the above requirements.

## **X. Benefits**

- a. Identify potential benefits expected from the research. Describe how the research results can be used, and by whom, to improve transportation practice. Possible benefits include:
  - i. Cost savings
  - ii. Increased safety
  - iii. Improved service
  - iv. Improved procedures
- b. To the extent possible, describe how these benefits can be measured and how their value can be determined after the study results are put into practice.

## **XI. Time Schedule**

- a. Provide a bar chart or other graphical presentation illustrating the scheduling of the major research tasks (Table 1). Indicate the number of months allocated to each task. The following should be considered in the project schedule:
  - i. The project kick-off TAC meeting within thirty (30) days of contract signature
  - ii. Quarterly TAC meetings
  - iii. Project closure TAC meeting
  - iv. Literature review (if noted as task in RFP)
  - v. Thirty (30) days to obtain a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) from Motor Vehicle to access vehicular crash data (if noted in RFP)
  - vi. Twenty (20) days for TAC/Iowa DOT review of draft report
  - vii. Project deadline (if noted in RFP)

Table 1 – Example of Major Tasks Schedule

Task	Month	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Literature Review		■	■										
Kick-off Meeting		■											
Field Surveys			■	■	■		■	■	■			■	■
Field Tests			■	■			■	■				■	■
TAC Meetings					■			■			■		
Observe Construction				■	■	■							
Cost Analysis							■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Develop Recommendations										■	■	■	■
Prepare Final Report											■	■	■
Present Findings to TAC													■

**XII. Staffing**

- a. Include pertinent background information for principal investigators and other team members significantly participating in the project. Provide specific information relating to their project responsibilities and to the value added to the project due to their participation. Support personnel may be identified by classification. Describe how academic, professional and research experiences relate to the project. Include a summary of past accomplishments in the same or closely related problem areas.
- b. If subcontracting is necessary, include subcontractors' key personnel and support staff in the proposal. Clearly identify subcontractors' involvement. Describe current commitments to other work in sufficient detail to permit assessment of the researchers' ability to meet the proposal's commitments.

**XIII. Iowa DOT or Local Jurisdiction Involvement**

- a. Describe any assistance required from Iowa cities, counties, or the Iowa Department of Transportation. Include such items as:
  - i. Traffic control
  - ii. Construction
  - iii. Highway maintenance
  - iv. Drilling and sampling
  - v. Access to transportation facilities
  - vi. Access to records or databases
  - vii. Interviews
  - viii. Material tests
- b. Quantify the required level of effort as fully as possible. Any expected participation from Iowa DOT staff or resources must be approved by the responsible bureau in writing and submitted as part of the proposal document unless participation or resource is pre-approved as stated in the RFP.

#### **XIV. Budget**

- a. Show the estimated cost for the entire research project. If the proposal includes effort by subcontractors, a similar budget table should be included for each.
- b. A breakdown of all travel costs must be identified separately and a detailed explanation of all travel costs shall be provided. Travel expenses to conferences are not allowed unless requested as part of the project by Iowa DOT Research or outlined in the RFP.
- c. It is the policy of the Iowa DOT that payment of tuition for students involved in research is not allowed. Students may only be reimbursed based on hours worked on the project, being documented as such on invoices.
- d. Indirect administration costs, which include both facilities and administration:
  - i. May only be applied to the first \$25,000 of sub-contract and support costs.
  - ii. Shall not be applied to equipment costs.
    1. Equipment means non-consumable property to be used in the performance of a project, having an annual cost of \$5,000 or more.
  - iii. Shall not be applied to computers, software or computer peripheral hardware usage fees.
  - iv. Shall not exceed 26% of total direct costs for contracts with educational institutions.
- e. Computers and software:
  - i. Purchase of computers, software or computer peripheral hardware is not an allowable cost.
  - ii. Usage fees for computers, software or computer peripheral hardware in order to provide computers and software used in the performance of a project is an allowable cost.
    1. A breakdown of all usage fees by type and amount shall be provided.
    2. Indirect administration shall not be applied to computers, software or computer peripheral hardware usage fees.
- f. Equipment, services or systems produced by the following are not allowed:
  - i. Huawei Technologies Company or ZTE Corporation (or any subsidiary or affiliate of such entities).
  - ii. Hytera Communications Corporation, Hangzhou Hikvision Digital Technology Company, or Dahua Technology Company (or any subsidiary or affiliate of such entities).
- g. The amount indicated as "Funding limitation" on the RFP, if provided, represents the funding level the research topic merits and the level of funding provided to complete the proposed work. Proposers should set the scope and depth of study accordingly.
- h. Proposals responding to the RFP should respond to the identified budget and project goals. Additional project tasks, beyond those outlined in the solicitation, may be identified by the principal investigator if deemed useful in improving the general

objective of the project. All additional tasks and budget items associated with them will be clearly identified in the proposal as extra work and will be shown separate from the project tasks and budget items associated with the solicitation's objectives. Because of budget constraints, additional funding may not be available. No budget extensions should be anticipated.

#### **XV. Submission**

- a. Submit completed proposals to [Proposal.Research@iowadot.us](mailto:Proposal.Research@iowadot.us).
- b. Use the following naming convention for the PDF submission:
  - i. ResearchProposalNumber\_Agency\_PrincipallInvestigatorLastName.pdf  
Ex. *SPR229\_ACME\_Jones.pdf* or *IHRB187\_DHConsultants\_Hill.pdf*