

Iowa DOT Research Functions Information for University Researchers

This is a brief guide to the main research functions of the Iowa DOT for use by university staff who want to submit proposals for research projects. It is not comprehensive; other offices sponsor small research projects. For more information, call Sandra Larson at 515-239-1205.

General Information

Iowa DOT funds \$5-6 million in research each year. These funds come from State Planning & Research Program (\$2m), Iowa Highway Research Board (\$2m), Transportation Safety Fund (\$.5m), and a variety of other smaller specialized sources.

Many research projects come about as a result of focus groups comprised of DOT staff, city and county engineers, consultants, and industry and university representatives. Focus groups are initiated by DOT based on types of work as outlined in the Iowa Transportation Research Collaboration Agreement between Iowa DOT, the three state universities and CTRE, the Center for Transportation Research and Education.

Each project has a DOT advocate whose responsibility is to monitor the progress of the project. Budgets are fixed. Quarterly progress reports are required. Research proposals are now required to have implementation and technology transfer components which will be monitored. IHRB also has some funding for immediate opportunities.

University researchers who want to propose a project should find an advocate in the appropriate work area to help work out proposal details, make contacts for funding and champion their cause.

In addition to research done through the Iowa DOT, national research projects are carried out through the national Cooperative Highway Research Program (NCHRP). The program funded \$25 million of research projects in FY 2005. In addition, NCHRP synthesis projects are reports of various practices in the highway or transit areas and NCHRP IDEA projects provide start-up funding for promising but unproven innovations in surface transportation systems. The IDEA program's goal is to foster ingenious solutions that are unlikely to be funded through traditional programs.

State Planning & Research - \$2 million/yr

The SP&R program is compiled in March but can be amended throughout the year to include new items. About half of the funding is reserved for TRB, NCHRP, pooled funds with other states, and ongoing needs. The rest is available for research projects, new technology applications, technology transfer and pilot implementation projects that support the department's construction and maintenance functions. Proposals and requests generally come from internal staff who have identified a need.

For more information contact Sandra Larson, Research & Technology Bureau Director, at 515-239-1205. Web site: <http://www.dot.state.ia.us/research/index.htm>

Iowa Highway Research Board (IHRB) - \$2 million/year

Twice each year the board publishes a request for research proposals (RFPs). The majority of research efforts will be focused on these topics. Proposals that fall outside of these requested areas may be accepted on a limited basis. Problem Statements need to be submitted by January 1 to be considered for the annual program. The Board sets annual funding priorities at its April meeting. Project RFPs are published in July and November.

The 15 member board is comprised of DOT staff, county and city engineers and university representatives. Funding comes from Primary Road, Secondary Road, and Street Research Funds.

For more information contact Mark Dunn at 515-239-1447.

Web site: http://www.operationsresearch.dot.state.ia.us/ihrb/iowa_highway_research_board.html

Transportation Safety - \$.5 million /yr

The Office of Traffic & Safety administers the Transportation Safety Improvement Plan (TSIP). TSIP projects can be safety studies, research or public information initiatives. Initial proposals can be one-page documents to be fleshed out before the TSIP application due date of August 15. Projects are selected in January to begin in July. The Transportation Safety Fund is ½% of annual Iowa gas tax receipts.

For more information contact Tom Welch, State Safety Engineer, at 515-239-1267.

Web site: <http://www.dot.ia.us/tsip.htm>