

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/research-requests-for-proposal> or <https://www.cognitofirms.com/iowaDOTResearch/researchRFPresponses>, the information posted on the website(s) 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

Cover Page

The cover page should include the following information:

- Proposal title (from RFP)
- Research proposal number (from RFP)
- "Submitted to Research Program Manager, Iowa Department of Transportation, Research and Analytics, 800 Lincoln Way, Ames, Iowa 50010"

Summary Page

The summary page should include the following information:

- "Submitted by" name, institution, address, e-mail address, phone, and ORCID of proposer
- Executive Summary (no more than 300 words)
- Project Cost
- Proposal date
- Keywords (from Transportation Research Thesaurus - https://trt.trb.org/trt_alphabet.asp)

Table of Contents

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

Problem Statement

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.

Background Summary

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.

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.

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.

Objectives

State each of the study's technical objectives as it is cited in the RFP.

Describe how each objective will be accomplished during the research. Any deviations from the objectives listed in the RFP must be explained and justified.

Research Plan

Describe how the objectives will be achieved through a logical and innovative plan. State each task proposed, and if listed in the RFP, include tasks as it is cited in the RFP.

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.

The plan should also describe the technical basis of the research. Describe the following, as appropriate:

- Principles or theories to be used
- Significant variables to be tested
- Analytical and statistical procedures
- Experimental and testing procedures
- Evaluation criteria
- Inspection and survey methods
- Controls to be used
- Material or procedure development

The plan should be complete, providing the greatest level of detail that the researcher's understanding of the problem permits.

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.

Products

List the products that will be delivered during the research project. Deliverables might include:

- Reports
- Computer programs
- Manuals
- Physical models
- Photographs
- Databases
- Video or other audio/visual materials

Unless directed otherwise in the RFP, always include the following items as products:

- Quarterly progress reports to the TAC
- Draft final report
- Final report
- Executive summary or Technical Brief

Electronic copies (in PDF format) of the final report and Technical Briefs are required unless permission is specifically granted otherwise.

Implementation/Technology Transfer

Describe how (in general) Iowa cities, counties, or the Iowa DOT can apply the anticipated research results to improve their practice.

- 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.
- 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 offices within Iowa DOT.
- 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.
- Identify institutional issues, including resource requirements, administrative rules, or laws, that might need to be addressed for successful implementation.

If findings will not be suitable for immediate implementation, indicate what further work might be necessary.

The PI, under the guidance of the TAC, will ensure that the final report has an implementation section that specifically meets the above requirements.

Benefits

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:

- Cost savings
- Increased safety
- Improved service
- Improved procedures

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.

Time Schedule

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:

- The project kick-off TAC meeting within thirty (30) days of contract signature
- Quarterly TAC meetings
- Project closure TAC meeting
- Literature review (if noted as task in RFP)
- Thirty (30) days to obtain Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) from Motor Vehicle to access vehicular crash data (if noted in RFP)
- Twenty (20) days for Iowa DOT review of draft report
- 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
Literature Review												
Kick-off Meeting												
Field Surveys												
Field Tests												
TAC Meeting												
Observe Construction												
Cost Analysis												
TAC Meeting												
Develop Recommendations												
Prepare Final Report												
Present Findings/TAC Meeting												

Staffing

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.

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.

Iowa DOT or Local Jurisdiction Involvement

Describe any assistance required from Iowa cities, counties, or the Iowa Department of Transportation. Include such items as:

- Traffic control
- Construction
- Highway maintenance
- Drilling and sampling
- Access to transportation facilities
- Access to records or databases
- Interviews
- Material tests

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 office in writing and submitted as part of the proposal document unless participation or resource is pre-approved as stated in the RFP.

Budget

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.

A breakdown of all travel costs must be identified separately and a detailed explanation of all travel costs must 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.

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.

For contracts with educational institutions, indirect administration cost rate shall not exceed 26% of total direct costs, excluding equipment purchases over \$5,000 and sub-contract/support costs amounts over \$25,000.

The amount indicated as "Estimated Funding" on the RFP, if provided, represents what Iowa DOT and/or Iowa Highway Research Board feel the research topic merits and

what level of funding should be necessary to complete the work. Proposers should set the scope and depth of study accordingly.

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.

Submission

Submit completed proposals through Iowa DOT's Research Office website at <https://iowadot.gov/research/research-requests-for-proposal>. A link to the submittal form, <https://www.cognitofrms.com/iowaDOTResearch/researchRFPresponses>, is made available according to the open proposal schedule.

Use the following naming convention for the PDF submission:

Research Proposal Number_Agency_PrincipalInvestigatorLastName.pdf

Ex. **SPR229_ACME_Jones.pdf** or **IHRB187_DHConsultants_Hill.pdf**