

Instructions to Get on Qualified Researcher List to Work with the Vermont Agency of Transportation

GENERAL INFORMATION

Project Overview

The Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) is requesting Statement of Qualifications (SOQ) from Institutions of Higher Education to provide research services. The VTrans research program utilizes state and federal funding and is conducted both internally and by contracted external organizations. This Request for Qualifications seeks to select a group of pre-qualified institutions for inclusion on a Qualified Researcher List that will have an opportunity each year to conduct research for VTrans through the competitive process described below. An institution must be on the Qualified Researcher List to conduct research for VTrans but inclusion on the Qualified Researcher List does not guarantee funding. At this time, only Vermont Institutes of Higher Education are receiving the Request for Qualifications. Institutions selected for the Qualified Researcher List will be required to enter into a cooperative agreement with VTrans before funding is provided for a specific research project.

Project Goals

Our external research program seeks to conduct projects that benefit the Agency by providing access to the special and diverse expertise of institutions of higher education. Projects must be related to VTrans' needs in planning, design, construction, management, and maintenance of highway, public transportation, and intermodal transportations systems. Example subjects include: materials, safety, bridge and roadway design, pavement durability, employee knowledge management, project prioritization, transportation planning and policy, cybersecurity, environmental, etc. The Agency expects that a variety of researchers and skills will be able to help identify and fill these needs and conduct research for the Agency.

General Scope of Work

Ultimately, funded projects will be those chosen as most beneficial to VTrans. All research projects have an Agency Technical Champion who guides the project through the selection process. After selection, the Technical Champion is assisted by a Technical Advisory Committee to guide the research, meet regularly with the researchers and to review the project deliverables.

In general, resulting research projects are expected to be 6 to 24 months in duration with a value from \$20,000 to \$150,000, including researcher/staff time, equipment or materials, and indirect costs.

Several recent VTrans Research and Innovation projects were presented in the September 2018 and September 2017 Research and Innovation Symposiums. More information about these projects can be found here:

<https://vtrans.vermont.gov/planning/research/2018symposium>

<https://vtrans.vermont.gov/planning/research/2017symposium>

VTrans research reports can be found at this link: <https://vtrans.vermont.gov/docs/completed>

Project Selection Process

The process for selection of external research projects is listed below for clarity. Responses to this Request for Qualification will be the basis for including specific institutions on the Qualified Researcher List and occurs outside the annual research project selection process. An institution must be on the Qualified Researcher List to conduct research for VTrans but inclusion on the Qualified Researcher List does not guarantee funding of a research project. Selected projects will be granted as a task

under a Cooperative Agreement between VTrans and the selected research provider. An example Cooperative Agreement is provided here: https://vtrans.vermont.gov/sites/aot/files/documents/Research_Cooperative_Agreement_Example.pdf

- a) Idea solicitation – VTrans Research Section gathers ideas through its web-form (<https://vtrans.vermont.gov/planning/research/research-ideas>), from any interested parties, including researchers from the institutions on the Qualified Researcher List.
- b) Project Champion Identification and Idea selection – Research Section works to find interested VTrans Staff to champion the projects, conducts literature review, and checks research in progress search. A subset of ideas are advanced.
- c) Distribution of Ideas to Qualified Researcher List and Request for Statements of Interest – Ideas are distributed to the Qualified Researcher list, with a request that researchers respond with a brief, 3-page max, statement of interest with brief methodology and experience on conducting research on the topic.
- d) Researcher Selection by Project Champion and Research Section – Project Champions review the statements of interest, evaluate the options, and select a researcher to move forward with to fully develop the project into a proposal.
- e) Full Proposal Request to selected Researcher – Project Champion works with the identified researcher to craft a proposal to meet their objectives. The proposals should have project timelines, schedule of deliverables and costs.
- f) Proposal Presentation by VTrans Project Champion to selection committee – Projects are presented to the selection committee, made up of VTrans Bureau Directors. The selection committee will select projects and attempt to maximize benefits and funding given the budgetary constraints.
- g) Contracting selected projects – Any necessary revisions are made to the selected projects, and they are contracted as work assignments under the cooperative agreement

STATEMENT OF QUALIFICATIONS SUBMITTAL

This Section describes the specific information that must be included in the SOQ. The purpose of the SOQ is to acquire brief submissions that reveal the proposing institutions interest and qualification in conducting VTrans research. This SOQ must include a letter of submittal, statement of interest, list potential principal investigators and qualifications, and past, relative research. Acceptance onto the Qualified Researcher List will be based on the Statement of Interest (up to 50 points), Researcher Resumes (30 points) and Related Past Experience (20 points).

Letter of Submittal

Proposers shall provide a Letter of Submittal on the Proposer's letterhead identifying the official representative and point of contact for the Proposer relative to the SOQ. The letter shall identify such representative's title, address, phone number, and e-mail address, and be signed by an authorized representative of the Proposer's organization. Your institute may prefer to give a Technical Representative that liaises with Research Section staff and a Fiscal/Contracting Representative that can sign on behalf of the institution.

Statement Describing Proposer's Interest in Conducting Research with VTrans

The Statement described in this Section 2.2 has a maximum of **50 points** allocated.

Please include a statement of the Proposer's interest in conducting research with VTrans. This statement should include subject areas which the institution has experience working in, and how they relate to the work VTrans conducts. Up to three new research ideas the investigators may have can be included (ideas should also be submitted through the VTrans Research Idea submission site <https://vtrans.vermont.gov/planning/research/research-ideas>)

This section can be a paragraph or a maximum of three pages.

List of Potential Principal Investigators and Qualifications

The elements described in Section 2.3 have a maximum value of **30 points** allocated.

This section should include a listing of potential Principal Investigators, their department/position within the institution, and areas of expertise. This should include a brief (one to two-page) resume of personnel that could conduct research projects, and that highlights their experience and qualifications to conduct research for VTrans. Please limit the number of personnel listed to 10.

These resumes are only illustrative and should highlight the qualifications of staff that may work on specific research projects. The inclusion of a resume does not imply that that person will be working on any projects ultimately awarded to an entity on the Qualified Researcher List.

Past Performance and Experience

The elements described in Section 2.4 have a maximum value of **20 points** allocated.

The Proposer shall provide one to six projects that highlight past work conducted by potential Principal Investigators. Examples of past work can include published studies in academic journals, presentations to conferences, prior graduate work of the investigators, current faculty led undergraduate research, or unfunded explorations of new methodology. Text on each project should be limited to one page, including Project Name, Researchers, Sponsor/Funding Organization as appropriate, rough project dates and location, the name and email of at least one Reference Contact related to the project, a description of the project and methodology used, and a list of project outcomes with links as appropriate. This does not have to be a comprehensive list of projects conducted by all identified researchers but a representative list of projects that may be related to VTrans activities.

For example, this can include VTrans-funded research, work done while the Investigator was a graduate student, or unfunded explorations of a new methodology. Reference Contacts could be at the sponsoring organization, a graduate advisor, or a coworker. If the project resulted in published papers or reports, please include links as possible.

SUBMISSION AND NEXT STEPS

The Statement of Qualification package should be submitted as a PDF to Emily.Parkany@vermont.gov by 5pm on November 30. Submitters will receive an acknowledgement that the documents were successfully received. We encourage submissions of project ideas using VTrans Research Idea submission form (<https://vtrans.vermont.gov/planning/research/research-ideas>) by December 14. The Project Selection process will follow the steps laid out in Section 1.4 above. All entities on the Qualified Researcher list will be asked in early January to respond to project ideas.