



Wisconsin Department of Transportation

Policy and Safety First Research Programs

Request for Proposals
FFY 2026

State DOT Transportation
Improvement Project Delivery
Resource Structure and Policies

	Request for Proposals Timeline and Information
February 18, 2026	Issue Date of this Request for Proposal (RFP). This RFP has been posted at: http://wisdotresearch.wi.gov/rfps-and-proposals .
	Please read the Proposal Preparation Instructions as this document has been updated recently and contains important information, including tables and templates, necessary for writing a proposal for submission.
March 4, 2026 4:30 PM (CST)	Questions regarding this RFP are due by this date and time. Questions need to be submitted electronically with the project name to: research@dot.wi.gov . Questions received after this date and time will not be considered.
March 16, 2026 4:30 PM (CST)	Responses to Questions will be posted on the WisDOT Research and Library website at: http://wisdotresearch.wi.gov/rfps-and-proposals .
March 30, 2026 12:00 PM (CST)	Proposals are due by this date and time. Proposals must be submitted electronically in a PDF version to: research@dot.wi.gov . Proposals received after this date and time will not be considered.
May 29, 2026	Award and Deny letters will be sent by email to all proposal submitters (only lead investigator will be notified).
	Project Budget and Schedule
\$100,000.	Project Budget shall not exceed this amount. Matching funds will not be considered in the proposal evaluation process. Proposals which exceed this amount will be disqualified.
12 Months	Period of Performance / Duration of Project
August 1, 2026	Anticipated Start Date of Project
June 1, 2027	Researcher's Final Report due
July 31, 2027	Anticipated End Date of Project
Policy	WisDOT Research Program
	For more information regarding this RFP contact the WisDOT Research Program at: research@dot.wi.gov .

NOTICE: Submission of a proposal does not guarantee an award. The Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) reserves the right to reject any and all proposals received; however, in the event WisDOT does award a project, such award will be based on uniform evaluation criteria.

Wisconsin Department of Transportation Policy and Safety First Research Programs Request for Proposals

State DOT Transportation Improvement Project Delivery Resource Structure and Policies

Acronyms and Definitions

COP – Close-Out Presentation

DOT – Department of Transportation

DMP – Data Management Plan

FTE – Full Time Equivalent

PI – Principal Investigator, lead researcher

POC – Project Oversight Committee comprised of subject matter experts who are the main point of contact with the PI.

RFP – Request for Proposal

R&L – WisDOT Research and Library Unit providing administrative support

WisDOT – Wisconsin Department of Transportation

1

Background and Problem Statement

The project will focus on gaining an understanding on how each state Department of Transportation (DOT) manages transportation improvement projects including the staffing classifications used, position descriptions and job duties, experience and education requirements, professional licensure and/or certifications requirements, compensation ranges and progression schedules, organizational structures and unit composition, and roles/responsibilities for those involved with delivering transportation improvement projects.

The department is seeking researcher proposals that would gather and analyze organizational data from state DOTs or similar organizations. Analysis should focus on organizations that deliver transportation improvement projects through a traditional state DOT model. Differences in a state's program sizes (program dollars, FTE), geography and weather (e.g. states who cannot perform construction activities in the winter months) should be included in the analysis. Analysis should also include calculations of improvement program size managed per staff classification and ratios of classification levels to each other (e.g. project manager per supervisor, supervisor per manager).

Once the analyses are conducted and complete, the researchers will report findings and provide recommendations for policies that lead to improved outcomes that align with WisDOT objectives and long-term staffing market conditions: improvements in organizational structure, unit composition, salary, classification use, and job duties. These recommendations will help WisDOT understand how to optimize available resources, create classification and job structures, and identify potential workforce pools that are sustainable from a hiring perspective.

2 Research Objectives

The objectives of this project are:

- Maximizing the use of position classifications with the intent on retention while delivering our program on-time and on-budget.
- Addressing shortages of engineering talent and retention challenges.
- Information from this study will help to review and develop a strategy for maximizing current staffing structure.
- Learning from other states how they use series and classifications along with any licensure or certification requirements.

3 Research Approach - Scope of Work/Work Plan/ Experimental Design

3.1 Task 1: Literature Review

Conduct a comprehensive literature review and assessment of current practices in other state DOTs. Identify state DOTs or similar organizations. Identify which organizations deliver transportation improvement projects through a traditional state DOT model. Identify differences between states regarding programs sizes in terms of program dollars and FTEs. Also identify similarities and differences in the geography and weather conditions found in states. Consider organizational items such as organizational structure, unit composition and compensation ranges. Assess classifications and compensation ranges to analyze if salary data is comparing similar responsibilities.

Deliverable: Literature Review which will be provided to the POC for review.

3.2 Task 2: State Identification

Identify “like” states as a cohort to survey for this project. Analyze organizational data from state DOTs or similar organizations. Identify state DOTs and similar programs in terms of program dollars and FTEs. Identify states with similarities in geography and weather conditions. In particular, states that cannot perform construction activities in the winter months should be included in the analysis. From these lists, create subsets of state DOTs or similar organizations by each category. The POC will determine which states to include in the State DOT Survey in Task 3.

Deliverable: A document and/or tables showing the state’s DOT data and the resulting subsets by category will be provided to the POC. The POC and researchers will review the document and/or tables at a POC meeting and determine which state DOTs or similar organizations are similar to WisDOT and suitable for inclusion in the State DOT Survey.

3.3 **Task 3: State DOT Survey**

Survey of state DOT and other agencies from Task 2 identified by the POC as similar to WisDOT. The purpose of the survey will be to gather organizational data. Researchers will create a survey for state DOTs requesting information regarding staffing classifications, position descriptions, position job duties, experience and education requirements, professional licensure and certification requirements, compensation ranges, progression schedules, organizational structures, unit composition and the roles and responsibilities of staff.

3.3a **Task 3a: Create Survey**

The researchers will create a draft survey which will be emailed to the POC. The POC will review with the researchers to develop the survey.

Deliverable: A draft of the survey questions will be provided to the POC for review.

3.3b **Task 3b: Distribute Survey and Analyze Results**

The researchers will distribute the survey, collect and analyze the results.

Deliverable: Survey data and the researchers' analysis of results will be provided to the POC.

3.4 **Task 4: Peer Exchange or Interviews**

3.4a **Task 4a: Identify Interview List**

The researchers and POC will identify 4-6 DOTs based on the survey results to conduct a peer exchange or interview. The researchers will coordinate and conduct the virtual peer exchange or interview sessions with selected staff at least 3-4 of these state DOTs.

Deliverable: List and contact information for potential interviewees will be provided to the POC.

3.4b **Task 4b: Peer Exchange / Interview Questions**

The researchers will draft a list of questions for a peer exchange or interviews. The questions may include a more in-depth discussion of issues initially discussed in the DOT Survey or identified in the Literature Review discussion.

Deliverable: Draft list of questions for a virtual peer exchange or interview session which will be provided to the POC for review. The PI and POC will determine if a small peer exchange or individual interviews would be more beneficial.

3.4c **Task 4c: Peer Exchange or Interviews**

The researchers will coordinate and conduct the peer exchange or interviews. The researchers will organize the responses. The researchers will review and analyze the responses and create a report.

Deliverable: The results of the peer exchange or interviews and a report including the review and analysis of responses will be provided to the POC.

3.5 **Task 5: Document WisDOT practices**

The researchers will focus on WisDOT's staffing classifications, professional requirements, organizational structures and roles and responsibilities of staff. The researchers will work with DTSD and Human Resources to identify a list of position descriptions, position job duties, experience and education requirements, professional licensure and certification requirements, compensation ranges, progression schedules, organizational structures, unit composition and the roles and responsibilities of staff. The researcher is not expected to duplicate the survey task with WisDOT. WisDOT will create a Project Panel to work with the researchers to make accessible the information that would be needed.

Deliverable: The WisDOT data collected and organized for comparison to the survey data from other states' DOTs will be provided to the POC.

3.6 **Task 6: Compare Practices**

In Task 6 the researchers will compare WisDOT data and data from other states' DOTs.

Deliverable: Comparison of data will be provided to the POC.

3.7 **Task 7: Analysis and Recommend Areas of Improvement for WisDOT**

The researchers will analyze the practices in use by WisDOT in comparison to other DOTs and create a list of recommended areas of improvement for WisDOT to explore or implement.

Deliverable: Researchers' analysis of the results from Task 6 and the recommended areas of improvement will be provided to the POC.

3.8 **Task 8: Project Final Report**

The research team will prepare and submit a Final Report following the timeline and requirements detailed in the [Final Report and Close-Out Presentation \(COP\) Information](#). This document contains important information for the Final Report and COP process.

The Final Report will include a summary of the project background and problem statement, research objectives and approach, best practices, recommendations, and interpretations developed during the project as well as a discussion of implementation options.

The POC members will review this report. Questions and comments will be submitted to the researcher and will require edits and revisions, or a response and explanation in a Summary Report. The Final Report will be considered complete and approved when the POC chair accepts all revisions and responses. Any data files collected from the lab and/or field testing/survey should be included for future use, analysis, and interpretation.

3.9 **Task 9: Close-Out Presentation (COP)**

The research team will have a 1-hour meeting to present a 30-45 minute PowerPoint presentation followed by discussion. The presentation includes a summary of the background and problem statement, research objectives and approach, best practices, recommendations, and interpretations developed during the project.

4 Required Testing/Equipment/Materials

n/a

5 Required Travel and Meetings

WisDOT will only fund travel expenses if they are included in the research project proposal budget.

5.1 Travel for Tasks and/or Field Work

Travel may be required for the research project.

5.2 Meetings

A kick-off meeting, periodic progress meetings, and a close-out presentation are required. Meetings are anticipated to be virtual. Please see the [Policy and Safety First Meeting Information](#) for additional information.

5.3 POC Meetings

At the start of the project the POC Chair, lead PI and R&L will determine points in the project where discussions and decisions are needed. One hour to 1½ hour-long meetings will be set for the full POC, the researchers, and R&L staff at those times, based on meeting needs. The researcher will typically have a short presentation with relevant information and progress updates.

5.4 Check-In Meetings

If there are gaps of more than eight weeks between meetings, check-in meetings of 20-30 minutes may be scheduled for the POC Chair, lead PI and R&L staff. A presentation is not expected at check-in meetings.

5.5 Close-Out Presentation (COP)

WisDOT welcomes a virtual Close-Out presentation; however, the researcher may present the results in person, paid by contract funds, if included in the project budget.

5.6 Conferences

Attendance at conferences is not expected to be a part of WisDOT research projects. If attendance at a conference is necessary for the project, the proposal must include justification and travel details.

6 WisDOT/POC Contribution

WisDOT will provide the following support through the Project Oversight Committee (POC) to support the successful completion of the project:

- Work will be conducted with project oversight by WisDOT staff and the Project Oversight Committee (POC). The POC members support the successful completion of the project.
- The research team may assume that WisDOT staff/POC members can contribute a maximum of 40 hours over the project's duration.
- The research team will not assume the availability of WisDOT staff or equipment in the proposal. If WisDOT or another entity donates equipment or staff time, a commitment letter must be included in the proposal.
- The POC will coordinate access to WisDOT materials used in laboratory test programs, if needed.
- The POC and POC will also coordinate access to WisDOT databases, if needed.

7 **Traffic Control** (if needed)

n/a

8 **Deliverables – Required Project Documentation**

8.1 Quarterly Progress Reports (QPRs)

A 1-2 page summary of project activities, next steps and expenditures for the quarter. WisDOT will provide the QPR template. See [WisDOT Research Quarterly Progress Report Information](#).

8.2 Quarterly Invoices

Invoices are submitted quarterly. See [WisDOT Research Program Invoice Information](#).

9 **Deliverables – Reports and Presentations**

9.1 Meeting Updates & Interim Reports

Meeting updates are typically short PowerPoint presentations. Interim reports may include the Literature Review and others as designated. Interim reports are flexible in format and length. These may be papers, graphs, tables, surveys, or other formats. The POC and researcher will determine what format and length is most appropriate for each report.

9.2 Project Final Report Requirements, Process and Timeline

The Final Report for the research project will go through three stages as it is reviewed by the POC and edited by the researcher(s): Project Report, Revised Report and Approved Final Report. For full details please see Policy and Safety First - Final Report and Close-Out Presentation (COP) Preparation and Submission Information.

9.7 Research Data

All research data will be identified and made available per the Data Management Plan (section 16).

Reports, Presentations and Deliverables

Researcher, please keep this table in the Proposal.

Task	Report / Presentation	Description of Deliverable
All	POC Meeting Updates	Throughout the project, PowerPoints, interim reports and meeting updates are requested to be emailed to R&L 1 week before POC meetings for POC review and preparation for meeting discussion.
1	Literature Review	Literature Review which will be provided to the POC for review.
2	State Identification	A document and/or tables showing the state's DOT data and the resulting subsets by category will be provided to the POC. The POC and researchers will review the document and/or tables at a POC meeting and determine which state DOTs or similar organizations are similar to WisDOT and suitable for inclusion in the State DOT Survey.
3a	Survey Draft	A draft of the survey questions will be provided to the POC for review
3b	Survey Data and Analysis	Survey data and the researchers' analysis of results will be provided to the POC.
4a	List of potential interviewees	List and contact information for potential interviewees will be provided to the POC.
4b	List of questions for peer exchange or interviews	Draft list of questions for a virtual peer exchange or interview session which will be provided to the POC for review. The PI and POC will determine if a small peer exchange or individual interviews would be more beneficial.
4c	Results and analysis of peer exchange or interviews	The results of the peer exchange or interviews and a report including the review and analysis of responses will be provided to the POC.
5	WisDOT data	The WisDOT data collected and organized for comparison to the survey data from other states' DOTs will be provided to the POC.
6	Compare Practices	Comparison of data will be provided to the POC.
7	Analysis and Recommendations	Researchers' analysis of the results from Task 6 and the recommended areas of improvement will be provided to the POC.
8	Project Report	Email Word and PDF versions to R&L. See Policy and Safety First - Final Report and Close-Out Presentation (COP) Preparation and Submission Information
8	Final Report and Summary document	Email Word and PDF versions to R&L
9	COP Presentation	See Policy and Safety First - Final Report and Close-Out Presentation (COP) Preparation and Submission Information

Deliverables – Research Results and Implementation Plan

WisDOT seeks to fund research with high implementation potential. Implementation potential will be tracked throughout the lifecycle of this research project and may include changes to expected implementation. The research plan must include specific statements describing anticipated research results and an assessment of implementation potential

10.1 Research Results

Proposals should detail the research results in terms of a specific deliverable(s)

10.2 Implementation Plan and Deliverables

This section also includes an implementation plan to address the planned implementation type(s) indicated in the RFP. While the plan may change as the research progresses, at a minimum the proposal should indicate:

- The product expected from the research.
- The stakeholder or intended audience that will most likely be impacted by the research results.
- Potential impediments to implementation.
- Activities necessary for successful implementation.
- Implementation deliverables
- Measures of success
- Data collection requirements

Please see the Proposal Preparation Instructions for specific directions related to Research Results and Implementation including completing the table below.

Researchers are invited to suggest deliverables as well as provide information regarding the deliverables included in the Implementation Plan and Deliverables table.

Implementation Plan and Deliverables		
Researcher, please add and describe implementation plans and keep this table in the Proposal.		
Successful implementation of this research will be achieved through the development of the following items:		
Implementation Type	Description	Researcher's Anticipated Deliverables/ Products/ Activities
<input type="checkbox"/> Develop a Model:		
<input type="checkbox"/> New Design Method or Guidance:		
<input type="checkbox"/> New Product Implementation:		
<input type="checkbox"/> Recommend Future Studies:		
<input type="checkbox"/> Revise a Specification:		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Inform Policy:	Inform Policy	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other:	Potential to influence future development of organizational structures, educational requirements, certifications, and position descriptions	

11 Project Schedule

The duration of the research project is provided on page 2 of this RFP. The researcher will provide a work schedule which should be based on the assumed contract start date.

11.1 **Summary of Hours**– The proposal must include template [Summary of Hours](#).

11.2 **Gantt Chart** - The project schedule must include a Gantt chart.

12 Budget

12.1 Budget Worksheet

The researcher will completely fill-in the Excel [Budget Worksheet](#) template.

12.2 Budget Justification

The researcher will provide a detailed description of costs related to travel, materials and supplies and other direct costs. See Proposal Preparation Instructions for details.

13 Qualifications of the Research Team

The proposer will provide information on the qualifications and background of the research team.

14 Other Commitments of the Research Team

The proposer will complete the **Summary of Commitments** in [Commitments of Research Staff](#).

15 Facilities and Information Services

The proposer will provide their laboratory and technical certifications for project related activities.

16 Data Management Plan

The research team will include a Data Management Plan (DMP) documenting all field/laboratory data and analyses to ensure accessibility and transparency of research data as required by the USDOT per the Public Access Plan (<https://ntl.bts.gov/ntl/public-access/creating-data-management-plans-extramural-research>). All research data will be identified and made available per the Data Management Plan. See Proposal Preparation Instructions for details.

17 References

The proposer will provide references of the research team.

18 **Proprietary Information in Proposal**

[DOA-3027 Designation of Confidential and Proprietary Information Form](#)

Any restrictions on the use of data contained within a proposal must be clearly stated in the proposal itself. Proprietary information submitted in response to a request will be handled under applicable Wisconsin procurement regulations and the Wisconsin public records law. Proprietary restrictions usually are not accepted. However, when accepted, it is the proposer's responsibility to defend the determination in case of an appeal or litigation.

Any material submitted in response to this request that the proposer considers confidential and proprietary information, and which qualifies as a trade secret, as provided in s. 19.36(5), Wis. Stats., or material which can be kept confidential under the Wisconsin public records law, must be identified on a Designation of Confidential and Proprietary Information form (DOA-3027).

Proposal prices cannot be held confidential.

19 **Public Records**

WisDOT intends to maintain an open and public process in the solicitation, submission, review, and approval of procurement activities. Notwithstanding the foregoing, records may not be available for public inspection before issuance of the award of the proposal.

The proposer shall retain all records produced or collected under an awarded contract for five (5) years following final payment under the contract and allow access to such records in accordance with requirements established under 49 Code of Federal Regulations 18.42, subch. II of Chapter 19, Wis. Stats. and Chapter 16, Wis. Stats.

20 **Evaluation Criteria**

The Evaluation Criteria and Scoring Matrix are in the Proposal Preparation Instructions.

End of Request for Proposal