



Wisconsin Department of Transportation

Policy and Safety First Research Programs

Request for Proposals

FFY 2026

Safety Project Prioritization

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

\$120,000

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**

Safety First 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

Safety Project Prioritization

Acronyms and Definitions

COP – Close-Out Presentation

DMP – Data Management Plan

DOT – Department of Transportation

HSIP – Highway Safety Improvement Program

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

SCP – Safety Certification Process

SHSP – Strategic Highway Safety Plan

WisDOT – Wisconsin Department of Transportation

1

Background and Problem Statement

The Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) is a federal-aid program with an objective to achieve a significant reduction in traffic injuries on all public roads. The HSIP requires a data-driven and strategic approach to fund highway safety projects in locations that have experienced a high crash history. The program has an emphasis on low-cost projects that can be implemented quickly, ideally within four years. HSIP has seen record breaking solicitations in terms of quantity of applications and requested funds. With recent HSIP solicitations, which occur twice each year, there have been more funds requested in both solicitations than what is available each year.

This new level of requests has resulted in a conflict between fiscal management and the delivery of critical safety projects that can save lives. WisDOT prioritizes safety and has implemented several processes in project development that can justify a safety improvements installation but there are

different methodologies among these processes. This difference has led to gaps that have been identified and need to be addressed when making investment decisions. One gap includes the costs of constructing comparable safety countermeasures across the state, which can vary greatly. Another gap includes project status within the HSIP; some projects, if identified on a statewide screening, are subject to different qualifying program criteria. Having projects with different statuses in the program makes it increasingly difficult to implement an objective prioritization matrix to apply to the entire program. Other gaps can be directly associated to the construction activities and needs, such as operation considerations or unavoidable costs (for example, utility coordination, railroad coordination, or real estate acquisition). Accommodating these project needs, along with installing the safety countermeasure, can drive costs up and make project less viable from an investment perspective.

The Safety Project Prioritization research project will investigate methods of how to prioritize proposals that fit the HSIP objectives along with WisDOT's goals outlined in the Strategic Highway Safety Plan (SHSP). A literature review should be conducted to review relevant literature available on the topic. Then the research team should review what methods other State DOT's currently use for prioritizing safety projects through a survey of other states and interviews with selected states who have robust prioritization processes. Additionally, the research team should further identify and explore gaps in the WisDOT HSIP process. Following this information gathering phase, the research team should develop a model that WisDOT can use to prioritize potential safety projects and test the model on recent projects.

The primary task of this project is for the research team to develop a model to help the department prioritize potential safety projects based on a variety of factors. This includes, but is not limited to, crash reduction benefits, costs, roadway type and context, land use, and other factors. Along with location characteristics and crash history, this model should include WisDOT set policies regarding HSIP development such as prioritizing low-cost projects, projects that exhibit a strong safety benefit costs analysis, and take into consideration project status. The model should also be capable of expanding to other considerations such as public engagement or positive benefit cost ratios exhibited in other safety processes such as the Safety Certification Process (SCP). This model should provide insight for staff to determine if a project proposal is best suited for dedicated safety funds or recommend other funding sources. Incorporating these variables when prioritizing safety funds will remain aligned with program and department objectives and ultimately direct HSIP funding to where it is needed the most and continue WisDOT's mission of developing and operating a safe and efficient transportation system.

2

Research Objectives

The objectives of this project are:

- Identify how other state DOTs are conducting their HSIP project selection.
- Explore ways for WisDOT to improve its HSIP project selection process.
- Develop and test a selection model for WisDOT HSIP projects that WisDOT can integrate into its current processes.

3.1 Task 1: Literature Review and Executive Summary

Conduct a comprehensive literature review and assessment of current practices including other state DOT HSIP processes, current state and federal HSIP guidance, methods for mitigating overprogramming, and aligning the HSIP with the SHSP. Researchers should look for literature that considers factors such as crash reductions benefits, costs, roadway type, land use, and potential design complications (e.g., railroad or utility coordination).

Deliverable: Literature Review and 2-page executive summary will be provided to the POC for review.

3.2 Task 2: Survey of Other State DOTs**3.2a Task 2a: Develop Survey**

Researchers will develop a survey to send to other State DOTs to obtain a high-level understanding of other states' HSIP selection processes. The survey should include a comprehensive scope on overall HSIP structure such as how sites are identified and potential programmatic or funding set-asides (i.e., if the state has a local set-aside, are sites identified centrally, etc.). Survey questions will be provided to the POC for review. The PI and POC will discuss and determine the final survey question list.

Deliverable: Survey questions which will be provided to the POC for review. The POC will have the opportunity to request changes and discuss concerns with researchers.

3.2b Task 2b: Survey List

Researchers will identify a list of HSIP subject matter experts within other state DOTs to send the survey to. The list of subject matter experts will be provided to the POC for review.

The PI and POC will discuss and determine the final list of survey recipients.

Deliverable: List of HSIP subject matter experts within other state DOTs will be provided to the POC for review. The POC will have the opportunity to request changes and discuss concerns with researchers.

3.2c Task 2c: Distribute Survey

Using a survey platform, researchers will distribute the survey via email to the approved list of recipients.

3.2d Task 2d: Collect and Analyze Data

Researchers will collect survey results and create an analysis of the results. The analysis should include a summary that reviews the survey results and includes notable findings such as commonalities between states.

Deliverable: The survey questions, list of survey recipients, raw data from the survey, an analysis of survey findings, a summary of the findings of the survey and recommendations of which state DOTs should be selected for Task 3 will be provided to the POC for review.

3.3 **Task 3: Interviews with Selected State DOTs HSIP Subject Matter Experts**

Based on the findings of Tasks 1 and 2, the researchers will recommend and the POC will select 4-6 HSIP subject matter experts within other state DOTs for the researcher to conduct in-depth interviews with. The purpose of the interviews will be to obtain further details regarding their current project selection process beyond the capabilities of a survey (e.g. documents, processes, etc.) and to use these findings in completing subsequent Tasks.

3.3a **Task 3a: Identify States for Interviews and Create a List of Interview Questions.**

Researchers will develop a list of 4-6 HSIP subject matter experts within other state DOTs to interview based on Task 2 survey analysis and create a list of sample questions based on priorities described in Task 1 and the background and problem statement. Researchers will then meet with the POC to review proposed interviewees and interview questions. POC will approve interviewees and interview questions prior to conducting interviews.

Deliverable: List of 4-6 HSIP subject matter experts within other state DOTs and a list of sample questions will be provided to the POC.

3.3b **Task 3b: Conduct Interviews**

Researchers will conduct interviews with approved list of 4-6 HSIP subject matter experts within other state DOTs and document detailed notes from the interviewees for each interview question.

3.3c **Task 3c: Analysis of Results**

Researchers will analyze the results of the interviews with consideration to survey results from Task 2 and WisDOT HSIP processes.

Deliverable: Detailed notes from the state DOT interviews, an analysis of the interview results with consideration to previous survey results and the WisDOT HSIP process, and a summary of findings of the interviews will be provided to the POC for review.

3.4 **Task 4: Identify and Explore Gaps in the WisDOT HSIP Process**

The research team should review current WisDOT HSIP processes and identify potential gaps based on previous findings and provide recommendations for WisDOT to make the process as effective as possible within the current framework. The POC will provide researchers with process documents related to the WisDOT HSIP program to use within their analysis (e.g. WisDOT HSIP program management manual). In their analysis, researchers should provide the POC a comparison table of practices between surveyed states and WisDOT. Using this comparison and other analysis methodologies, researchers should provide a detailed explanation of their analysis, their conclusions, and recommendations. The analysis and recommendations should also consider factors such as crash reductions benefits, costs, roadway type, land use, and potential design complications (e.g., railroad or utility coordination).

Deliverable: A comparison of practices between surveyed states and WisDOT, a review of selected analysis method(s), a detailed explanation of their analysis, conclusions, and recommendations, and a summary of the identified gaps and recommendations will be provided to the POC for review.

3.5 **Task 5: Develop a Model to Prioritize Safety Project Requests**

The research team should develop a model that will help WisDOT prioritize proposed safety projects and give consideration to the current HSIP process, improved alignment with SHSP, and recommendations from findings in previous tasks that have proven effective for other agencies. The model should also consider factors such as crash reductions benefits, costs, roadway type, land use, and potential design complications (e.g., railroad or utility coordination). The model developed for this task should be made available to WisDOT to own and modify.

Deliverable: A model to prioritize safety project proposals; the format of this model is open for research team input will be provided to the POC for review.

3.6 **Task 6: Test the Model**

The research team should test the model developed in Task 5 with recent proposals received by WisDOT. Recent proposals will be determined by the POC to be tested by the research team. All contents of proposals are to be treated as confidential information.

Deliverable: The raw data from testing the model and analysis of the validity of those results; an analysis of the results obtained from test cases; and summary of the results will be provided to the POC for review.

3.7 **Task 7: 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.

3.8 **Task 8: 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**

4.1 **Required Testing**

This project will require testing of the model developed during Task 5.

4.2 **Equipment**

Include costs in research proposal budget if equipment will be necessary for Tasks. Provide explanation if cost for any piece of equipment is over \$1,000.

WisDOT does not anticipate researchers requiring any special equipment for the project that would require purchase.

4.3 **Non-WisDOT Equipment and Materials**

The research team is responsible for providing necessary personal protective equipment (PPE) for fieldwork. PPE can be included in the research proposal budget.

Researchers will require access to computers and any relevant computer programs to conduct the tasks described.

4.4 **Materials**

Include costs in research proposal budget if materials will be necessary for Tasks. Provide explanation if cost for any materials is over \$1,000.

WisDOT does not anticipate any materials will need to be purchased for this project.

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**

WisDOT does not anticipate that travel will be necessary for this research project. Meetings with WisDOT can be conducted virtually and other tasks can be accomplished remotely or through virtual means. If the researcher anticipates that in-person meetings will be required, justification and cost should be provided. Costs cannot exceed the stated project budget.

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.

5.4 **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.

5.5 **Conferences**

This research will not include participation at conferences.

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.
- WisDOT will provide access and details to resources that include, but are not limited to, any current process documents for selecting HSIP projects and information on HSIP projects for the purposes of testing the model developed by researchers.

7

Traffic Control (if needed)

Traffic control will not be needed for this project.

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.

9.3 Research Data

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

| <h2>Reports, Presentations and Deliverables</h2> | | |
|--|--|---|
| <p>Researcher, please keep this table in the Proposal.</p> | | |
| 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 and Summary | Literature Review and 2-page executive summary will be provided to the POC for review. |
| 2a | Survey Questions | Survey questions which will be provided to the POC for review. The POC will have the opportunity to request changes and discuss concerns with researchers. |
| 2b | Survey List | List of HSIP subject matter experts within other state DOTs will be provided to the POC for review. The POC will have the opportunity to request changes and discuss concerns with researchers. |
| 2d | Survey Results | The survey questions, list of survey recipients, raw data from the survey, an analysis of survey findings, a summary of the findings of the survey and recommendations of which state DOTs should be selected for Task 3 will be provided to the POC for review. |
| 3a | Interview List of States and Questions | List of 4-6 HSIP subject matter experts within other state DOTs and a list of sample questions will be provided to the POC. |
| 3c | Interview Results and Analysis | Detailed notes from the state DOT interviews, an analysis of the interview results with consideration to previous survey results and the WisDOT HSIP process, and a summary of findings of the interviews will be provided to the POC for review. |
| 4 | WisDOT HSIP Review | A comparison of practices between surveyed states and WisDOT, a review of selected analysis method(s), a detailed explanation of their analysis, conclusions, and recommendations, and a summary of the identified gaps and recommendations will be provided to the POC for review. |
| 5 | Model Development | A model to prioritize safety project proposals; the format of this model is open for research team input will be provided to the POC for review. |
| 6 | Model Testing | The raw data from testing the model and analysis of the validity of those results; an analysis of the results obtained from test cases; and summary of the results will be provided to the POC for review. |
| 7 | Project Report | Email Word and PDF versions to R&L. See Policy and Safety First - Final Report and Close-Out Presentation Preparation and Submission Information |
| 7 | Final Report | Email Final Report and Summary Page to R&L in Word and PDF versions. |
| 8 | COP Presentation | See Policy and Safety First - Final Report and Close-Out Presentation Preparation and Submission Information |

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Develop a Model: | Model for WisDOT to prioritize safety project proposals. Model should consider variables in current HSIP processes and information gathered throughout the research project. | |
| <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 type="checkbox"/> Inform Policy: | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other: | | |

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.

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.

Evaluation Criteria

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

End of Request for Proposal