

Technical Panel Roles and Responsibilities

Technical panels (TP) oversee all MDT research projects. The panels are formed at the beginning of each project. Members are carefully selected with specific backgrounds that will provide a robust and well-rounded review of the project.

The research project belongs to the technical panel; the project's success hinges on the technical panel and its oversight.

Each project has its own technical panel, consisting of three to ten individuals from both inside and outside of MDT, with knowledge and a vested interest in the research topic, results, and implementation. FHWA may be on a technical panel, with the Business Solutions Office (BSO) assigning the Research Project Manager. Individuals on panels should adequately represent the technical breadth of the issue at hand and be balanced with respect to viewpoint and representation. Each panel member is chosen to represent the needs of their respective division, department, organization, and/or constituencies.

Benefits

The benefits of serving on a technical panel are many and varied. Some are listed below.

- ★ Obtain answers to questions and solve problems.
- ★ Help MDT to meet its mission by improving quality, safety, cost effectiveness, economic vitality, and sensitivity to the environment.
- ★ Support the future direction of MDT.
- ★ Help to improve operations within your area.
- ★ Align research with agency and program objectives, strategies, goals and measures.
- ★ Communicate, coordinate, and collaborate within a team environment.
- ★ Contribute to your professional development.

Responsibilities

Note: All tasks must be performed in a timely manner.

Technical Panel Member (including chair)

- Identifies if additional members are needed for the technical panel.
- Oversees project from inception through implementation. Implementation (i.e., products necessary, identification of barriers, mitigation of barriers) should be considered from the very first panel meeting.
- Reviews the literature review.
- May determine the best method to proceed (cancel project; implement available results; or secure funding from local/MDT, regional, or national research programs).
- Reviews the research problem statement. A clear and concise research problem statement is the guide for the project proposal, which is basis of the project contract.

- May determine the consultant procurement option. Typically, the team selects a consultant from a public institution. However, the team may determine that an RFP should be issued.
- Reviews proposal(s) and ensures it represents the research question.
- Attends the project kick-off meeting and other meetings, with the consultant as documented by the project proposal and/or technical panel.
- Carefully reviews all project products for completeness and accuracy. The task reports (TR) are especially critical for technical panel members to review. The TR provides detailed information on each task, including what was done, how it was done, and the results. The TRs can be combined to form much of the final report.
- Monitors project progress to ensure the project stays on scope and delivers desired products. Reviews project deliverables (i.e., progress reports, task reports, other interim products, final report, and other final products) and communicate issues with consultant through the MDT Research Project Manager. This is critical for project success.
- Inform management, organizations, and/or constituencies of all progress and products of the project.
- Ensure implementation is considered at all stages of the project.

Technical Panel Chair (typically the MDT Champion)

- Identifies technical panel members and confirms each has time and are willing and able to commit to the technical panel.
- Works with the Business Solutions office to presents scope and business case information to the Research Review Committee (RRC) for approval-in-concept. For more information about the roles of the RRC, please contact the Business Solutions Office.
- Leads technical panel meetings.
- Encourages active participation by all panel members.
- Helps the panel reach consensus.
- Promotes implementation throughout the project lifecycle.

MDT Research Project Manager

- Schedules technical panel meetings.
- Serves as the liaison between the technical panel and consultant, providing panel decisions to the consultant.
- Manages all information flowing between the technical panel as a whole or individual technical panel members, and the consultant.
- Ensures project stays within scope and budget, and issues are addressed in a timely fashion.
- Manages contractual compliance.

Approximate Time Commitment

Time commitment varies with each project. Research meetings are usually 30 minutes to one hour every month or every 3 months depending on the project. The following table provides major categories with typical timeframes.

Scope and business case development (Project Chair in conjunction with BSO)	2 to 8 hours
Proposal review (chair and TP)	2 to 4 hours (If an RFP is issued: 1 to 5 days)
Report review and meetings (chair and TP)	1 to 3 hours per submitted product
Final product review (chair and TP)	1 to 2 days