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MDOT Develops Action Plans to Improve Agency/Stakeholder Interaction

The Office of Research and Best Practices (ORBP) is working in conjunction with the Performance Excellence Division to provide MDOT with a research process improvement action plan. ORBP is proud to report on process improvement proposals developed based on internal/external stakeholder input.

ORBP knows it can't be the best it can be without collaboration between the Department, project managers, principal investigators, and internal and external stakeholders. With this in mind, MDOT organized two listening sessions with MDOT staff and a third session with university partners in September 2009. During these sessions, ORBP staff listened intently to project managers, focus area managers, principal investigators, and university contract administrators. Internal and external constituents openly voiced experiences and frustrations with the process that MDOT adopted in 2008 for managing the SPR, Part II, Research Program.

The goal of the sessions, organized by MDOT's Performance Excellence Division Consultant Mark Becker, was to contribute to ORBP's performance excellence through open dialog. The ideas voiced by concerned stakeholders during these sessions led to ORBP's nine work sessions lasting over three hours each, and resulted in process improvements such as:

- Providing opportunities for internal and external communication within and between all levels of MDOT and external stakeholders;
- Allowing external stakeholders equal access during research idea development;
- Dedicating more time for meaningful input from all research stakeholders; and
- Training stakeholders to understand their role in the improved research program.

These proposed process changes are just the first big step in improving ORBP's research program. During the first half of 2010, MDOT will also be meeting with its University partners to improve the contracting process. In the mean time, ORBP is interested in obtaining input on those process improvements that are related to the three major research project development activities:

1. Developing Research Ideas
2. Defining the Problem Statement
3. Contracting a Project

The improved process includes the following changes:

1. Research Ideas
 - a. Set Priorities: Research Executive Committee (REC) sets strategic priorities nine months earlier to provide more time in the process.
 - b. Call for Research Ideas: All research stakeholders may respond to MDOT strategic priorities and submit research ideas for consideration. This new step provides opportunities for MDOT's technical staff and external stakeholders to maximize creativity and input.
 - c. Idea Review: ORBP facilitates meetings with mid level managers and technical experts to review ideas and name research champions. This new step enables effective MDOT staff involvement.

See "Listening" on page 2

From Calvin's Desk



We are excited to announce that the Department is requesting your research ideas. So please, send us your ideas as outlined in this newsletter. We have funding available, and now more than ever, we are looking for ideas and projects that can provide Michigan with the competitive edge that will grow our economy and keep our workers working. It is important that these research ideas align with MDOT's business interests as outlined in MDOT's strategic research priorities found on our Web page.

We are looking forward to the ideas that we'll receive over the next month, and to subsequent proposals we will receive next year. With our new processes in place to increase collaboration and communication with our stakeholders, we are expecting some of the best research projects yet.

From me and the staff of the ORBP, we wish you a happy and prosperous New Year and new decade.

Calvin

Calvin Roberts, P.E.
Engineer of ORBP

- b. Approving Problem Statements: Problem statements will be approved prior to posting by the 1) Research Champion, 2) Focus Area Managers, 3) Bureau director, 4) Deputy director, and 5) Engineer of Research and Best Practices. This allows for MDOT program alignment and approval at several levels.

3. Proposals & Contracting

- a. Request for Proposals: Two requests for proposals will be posted, one for each of the fiscal years in the biennium. In addition, the time for proposal preparation will be extended to six weeks for each annual request.
- b. Scoring: Proposals will be scored by MDOT's technical staff with an improved scoring system. The first fiscal year's proposals will be scored in the spring and the second fiscal year's proposals will be scored in the fall. Training and improved scheduling will help technical staff complete the scoring.
- c. Projects awarded: ORBP will work with the Contract Services Division and the Principal Investigator to get contracts in place for the project award.

With these and future improvements, ORBP will position itself to deliver another biennium of new research projects that save citizens' lives and taxpayers' dollars. ORBP is grateful that its stakeholders took the time to express their concerns and suggestions clearly, and ORBP is pleased and excited about the improvements we are making as a result.

ORBP looks forward to sharing more of the details about the changes as the next biennial call cycle approaches. Stakeholders are invited to review the process and send comments to <mdot-research@Michigan.gov>. "We want everyone's feedback on this improved process," says Calvin Roberts, Engineer of Research and Best Practices, "We want ORBP to be a leading DOT research program in the country and we want everyone involved to be proud of our research program and accomplishments. We know that can't happen without everyone's support and involvement."



Listening (continued from page 1)

- d. Idea Approval: Research Executive Committee (REC) approves a final list of ideas for the Research Summit and shares it with all research partners. This step effectively communicates MDOT's priority projects and the Research Summit agenda.
- e. Research Summit: ORBP will invite internal and external stakeholders to actively discuss and develop project ideas in their areas of expertise at the May 2010 Summit.

2. Problem Statements

- a. Writing Problem Statements: Trained Research Champions will write research problem statements with Project Managers and external experts helping as needed. This provides technical staff with opportunities for process input.

Revised Research Administrative Schedule

Administrative Activity	Fiscal Year 2010				Fiscal Year 2011				2012 Projects Begin
	1st Quarter	2nd Quarter	3rd Quarter	4th Quarter	1st Quarter	2nd Quarter	3rd Quarter	4th Quarter	
1. Research Ideas			S						
2. Problem Statements									
3. Proposals & Contracting					R			R	
R = Request for proposal one request for each year of the Biennium is represented									
S = Research Summit									



Research Summit Coming In May

The Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) will hold the second Biennial Research Summit in Lansing in May 2010. The Summit is the first step in transforming good ideas into well defined problem statements. The Summit meeting agenda will feature topics of interest to university researchers, MDOT staff, consultants and transportation stakeholders. Summit attendees will:

- Learn about MDOT's strategic research focus areas;
- Listen to presentations about projects from ORBP staff and MDOT's research project managers;
- Participate in small groups to improve research ideas approved by MDOT's executive team; and
- Network with others with common research interests.

Plan on attending this transportation research event and watch our Web site for announcements on the location, date, and agenda. Agenda items will include:

- Research Needs - MDOT's Research Executive Committee members will describe short- and long-term research needs, and ORBP will report on specific promising research ideas;
- Past Research - MDOT researchers will spotlight high-value research already yielding benefits in Michigan; and
- Future Research - Meeting attendees will split into working groups with project champions and discuss how to improve research ideas.

Ideas previewed at this Summit form the basis for MDOT proposal requests in the following year. In preparation for the upcoming Summit, MDOT staff will be meeting at all levels of the organization to generate and rank research ideas. ORBP will be organizing and facilitating the process. See the article in this newsletter or watch our Web page <<http://www.Michigan.gov/mdotresearch>> for direction on submitting research ideas by February 16, 2010 to be considered for the Research Summit.



About the Office of Research and Best Practices



Our Mission

The ORBP's mission is to:

- Coordinate and manage research programs for the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT);
- Monitor learning and innovation in development and operations of integrated transportation systems;
- Promote implementation of learning and innovation throughout MDOT; and
- Encourage research that supports integrated multi-modal transportation and MDOT's strategic goals.

Our Vision

The ORBP's vision is to be a recognized leader in coordinating applied research and implementing results. We will accomplish this by:

- Identifying cutting edge research topics;
- Coordinating development of research projects; and
- Implementing research results.

Our core strength results from a highly integrated network of dynamic partnerships among transportation professionals.

Our Values

The ORBP's values include:

- Quality
- Teamwork
- Customer Orientation
- Integrity
- Pride
- Determination
- Innovation
- Partnership

The ORBP Team

Main ORBP Office

Calvin Roberts, Engineer of ORBP
Trudy Schutte, Executive Secretary
Wen-hou Kuo, Statistician
Angela Nelson, Department Analyst

MDOT Statewide Library

Alexandra Briseno, Librarian

Best Practices/Legislative Initiatives

Andre Clover, Administrative Engineer
Transportation Research Program
Michael Townley, Research Manager
Annette Nealey, Research Admin. Asst.
Nancy Crider, Research Analyst
Homer Sprague, Statistician

Contact Us

Hearing from you is very important to us. Your questions and comments provide opportunities for us to improve our processes for managing research. Please use one of the methods below to let us know what you're thinking.



Phone: 517-241-2780



E-mail: mdot-research@Michigan.gov



Web site: <http://www.Michigan.gov/mdotresearch/>

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