

AASHTO Research Advisory Committee
Task Force on the Peer Exchange.
Peer Exchange Questionnaire.

This is a survey about your experience with, and your opinions about the peer exchange. The survey will serve as a basis for the continuing work of, and eventual recommendations by the RAC Task Force on the Peer Exchange.

The peer exchange requirement was included in the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA). Most research programs completed their first peer exchange between 1995 and 1999. It appears that the last official guidelines for conducting peer exchanges was a document titled "Guidelines for Conducting Peer Exchanges of State DOT Research Programs" dated July 13, 2000.

Since the introduction of the peer exchange requirement, its recognized success has prompted other groups to adopt the same or similar process on a voluntary basis. Note, however, that for the purposes of this survey, a peer exchange refers specifically to the RD&T program Peer Exchange required in the Federal Code of Regulations for State Planning And Research programs [CFR 23 420.207(a)(5)].

A. General Information.

A1. For how long have you been Research Manager/Director/Engineer for your state DOT?

	Frequency	Percent
2 years or less	7	17.9
3-5 years	11	28.2
5-10 years	13	33.3
10-20 years	7	17.9
More than 20 years	1	2.6
Total	39	100.0

A2. In all your work experience, how many years were in each of the following?

	YEARS IN			
	TRANSPORTATION %	ANY KIND OF RESEARCH %	ANY KIND OF MANAGEMENT %	TRANSPORTATION RESEARCH %
2 years or less	5.1	2.6	5.1	7.7
3-5 years	0	13.2	2.6	15.4
5-10 years	15.4	31.6	15.4	28.2
10-20 years	23.1	23.7	53.8	25.6
More than 20 yrs	56.4	28.9	23.1	23.1
Total	100.0	100	100.0	100.0

A3. On a 5 point scale, with 5 meaning it **fits very well**, and 1 meaning it **does not fit at all**, please indicate how the following statements apply to you (*circle one number in each row*).

	Fits me very well		Neutral	Doesn't fit at all		Total
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
My first day on this job:						
a. I was confident in my understanding of research	23.1	23.1	20.5	15.4	17.9	100.0
b. I was confident in my abilities as a manager	43.6	23.1	17.9	10.3	5.1	100.0
c. I understood SPR program requirements and expectations	10.5	13.2	13.2	31.6	31.6	100.0
At the present time:						
d. I am confident in my understanding of research	71.8	25.6	0.0	0.0	2.6	100.0
e. I am confident in my abilities as a manager	71.8	23.1	0.0	5.1	0.0	100.0
f. I understand SPR program requirements and expectations	64.1	28.2	7.7	0.0	0.0	100.0

B. Peer Exchange Experience.

B1. Please describe your experience with peer exchanges (circle all that apply).

	YES
a. I have hosted my own peer exchange	82%
b. I have hosted more than one peer exchange	49%
c. I have hosted more than two peer exchanges	26%
d. I have served on a peer exchange panel for another state	72%
e. I have served on more than one peer exchange panel for another state	54%

B2. Are you familiar with the guidance materials for peer exchanges provided on the SCOR/RAC web site? <http://research.transportation.org/?siteid=55&pageid=878>

YES 89.7%
NO 10.3%

B3. If your answer above was “yes,” do you think it needs to be updated?

YES 51.3%
NO 17.9%
 (Not Familiar) 10.3%
 (No response) 20.5%

C. Peer Exchange Issues.

C1. Below is a list of some of the elements in organizing a peer exchange. On a 5 point scale, with 1 being **very easy** and 5 being **very difficult**, please tell us whether you expect each to be easy or difficult. (circle one number in each row)

	Very Difficult (%)	Difficult (%)	Neutral (%)	Easy (%)	Very Easy (%)	Don't know (%)
a. Identifying a suitable focus/objective for my next peer exchange	7.7	12.8	17.9	35.9	25.6	0
b. Obtaining participation from my agency's top management	10.3	15.4	17.9	28.2	28.2	0
c. Obtaining participation of my FHWA Division office	0	0	2.6	15.8	81.6	0
d. Obtaining participation of research program stakeholders	0	8.1	13.5	40.5	37.8	0
e. Paying for meals and refreshments	13.2	18.4	21.1	18.4	34.2	0
f. Paying for the panel's travel expenses	10.5	15.8	21.1	18.4	34.2	0
g. Implementing peer exchange recommendations	0	10.3	46.2	41	2.6	0
h. Finding staff and resources to support the peer exchange	5.1	23.1	20.5	25.6	25.6	0
i. Travel authorization for another state's peer exchange.	5.6	16.7	27.8	30.6	19.4	0

C2. Is there anything you would like to add regarding any of these peer exchange issues?

Example 1 - Our research program is small with limited staff that is very busy with our research duties. My belief is that our program could get as much benefit from less resource intensive peer exchange activities - such as external participation in ancillary state research program (i.e. annual project selection) meetings.

Example 2 - I think the guidance document is still adequate but if updated it should specifically allow more flexibility consistent with some of the more innovative peer exchanges that have been held recently. Exchange of manuals, review of them during the exchange and the annual follow-up are not routinely followed so should not be shown as requirements.

C3. If you had the option to use a pooled fund project to obtain the services of an event planner, who would pay all your peer exchange expenses, and charge you cost plus a reasonable service fee, would you participate in the pooled fund and use the event planner? (circle 1 number)

- 1. Definitely would. 5.4%
- 2. Probably would. 24.3%
- 3. Might or might not. 24.3%
- 4. Probably would not. 29.7%
- 5. Definitely would not. 16.2%

C4. Federal regulations require peer exchanges be completed “periodically.” FHWA has interpreted “periodically” to mean every three years. Do you think completing a peer exchange every three years is the right interval between peer exchanges, or not? (*circle 1 number*)

1. Every three years is too frequent (*answer C5*) 59%
2. Every three years is about right (*Skip to C6*) 38.5%
3. Every three years is too infrequent (*answer C5*) 2.5%

C5. If not three years, what do you think is amore appropriate interval?

Every 2 years	2.9%	Every 6 years	5.7%
Every 3 years	42.9%	Every 10 years	2.8%
Every 4 years	11.4%	Total	100.0%
Every 5 years	34.3%		

C6. Some people think that a fixed frequency for peer exchanges is not the best policy, and that other factors should be considered. On a 5 point scale, with 1 being **Strongly Disagree** and 5 being **Strongly Agree**, please tell us whether you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

	Disagree Strongly (%)	(%)	Neutral (%)	(%)	Agree Strongly (%)	Don't Know (%)
a. The current policy of holding peer exchanges every three years is appropriate, and should be retained.	36.8	23.7	26.3	10.5	2.6	0
b. A peer exchange should be held just before or soon after a change in research program leadership .	15.8	13.2	31.6	15.8	23.7	0
c. A peer exchange is a good idea soon after a change in agency leadership .	13.5	24.3	35.1	16.2	10.8	0
d. For any one manager, the value of a peer exchange begins to diminish after two or three.	13.9	19.4	16.7	30.6	19.4	0
e. Robust research programs with experienced leaders need less frequent peer exchanges.	7.7	12.8	28.2	25.6	25.6	0
f. Scheduling of peer exchanges should consider the appropriate time to assess the impact of significant program changes.	0	2.7	10.8	37.8	48.6	0
g. Scheduling a peer exchange should support a research program leader in advancing specific program and policy objectives.	0	7.7	7.7	35.9	48.7	0
h. A three year schedule for peer exchanges is awkward because of my state's biennial legislative and budget cycle.	31.4	14.3	42.9	2.9	8.6	0
i. There are circumstances under which a new peer exchange might be needed sooner than three years.	2.7	13.5	8.1	51.4	24.3	0
j. Research program managers should have discretion to negotiate the frequency of peer exchanges with their FHWA Division office.	0	5.1	0	17.9	76.9	0

C7. Is there anything more you would like to add regarding any of these factors that may influence scheduling of a peer exchange?

Example - Forcing a peer exchange every three years (or other fixed interval) is not an effective management tool or efficient use of resources. The Research office should have the flexibility and discretion to schedule peer exchanges based on need, in cooperation with their FHWA Division office.

C8. People have suggested that a greater variety of optional peer exchange formats ought to be encouraged. On 5 point scale with 1 indicating a high level of interest and 5 indicating no interest at all, please indicate your level of interest in the following proposed peer exchange options (*note that not all these options would currently meet FHWA guidelines.*)

	Very Interested		Neutral		Not at all interested	Don't Know
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
a. With travel, panelists need a week to participate in a 3-day peer exchange. Would you like the option of a peer exchange format of less than 3 days?	48.7	28.2	12.8	7.7	2.6	0
b. To reduce the need to travel, would you be interested in conducting a peer exchange via video conference, webinar, etc.?	23.1	15.4	17.9	15.4	25.6	2.6
c. Would you be interested in a regional peer exchange, in which 3-or more states complete their peer exchanges collaboratively?	43.6	28.2	15.4	7.7	5.1	0
d. Would you be interested in completing a peer exchange by conducting your own fact finding on-site visit to other state research programs?	30.8	12.8	33.3	10.3	12.8	0

C9. Are there other non-standard peer exchange formats that you would like to suggest?

Example 1 - While not a formal exchange, the monthly regional RAC conference calls end up serving as mini peer exchanges. In that setting we have the opportunity to submit agenda items and then discuss with the group how they handle certain situations in their state.

Example 2 - There is value in having the visiting exchange members able to interact with the various parties within the state being reviewed. And, brainstorming and interaction is important. Web-based exchanges will have significantly less value than in-person exchanges, and trying to combine states will only be valuable if the geographical proximity is such that many employees from each state being reviewed are able to travel to the selected location. A scanning tour to another state, to see their program, makes sense to a degree, and might be useful to obtain certain insights, but, again, it fails to include the people in the research program being reviewed. Also, the ability of the visiting team to interact with DOT leadership (non-research people), customers within and outside the Department, and related University people is only possible under the current format. It might make sense to allow some of these varied formats only for certain cases where specific issues are being evaluated or considered.

Example 3 - It might be valuable for state (neighboring or not) to have the chance to co-host a peer exchange on a topic of mutual interest. It seems you'd need to be careful to avoid stepping away from a peer exchange and into a mini-conference, but there could be considerable value.

C10. A number of people have made suggestions that might make it easier for you to organize and carry out your next peer exchange. On 5 point scale with 5 indicating a high level of interest and 1 indicating no interest at all, please indicate your level of interest in the following proposed peer exchange options.

	Not at all Interested (%)	(%)	Neutral (%)	(%)	Very Interested (%)	Don't Know (%)
a. Would you be interested in receiving training on how to conduct a peer exchange, as part of RAC 101 for example?	12.8	20.5	25.7	23.1	12.8	5.1
b. Would it interest you to have access to a list of volunteer peer exchange panel members and their qualifications, on the web?	7.7	12.8	12.8	35.9	28.2	2.6
c. Would you be interested in a document that compiles peer exchange best practices and implementation success stories?	5.1	10.2	12.8	30.8	38.5	2.6

C11. Do you have any comments regarding these or other suggestions that might make a peer exchange easier to organize and carry out?

Example 1 - A best practices document should include executive-level summary on purpose and obj.

Example 2 - It is possible that reviewing the above items may be sufficient and consequently you would not have to do a PE. For instance if someone else PE covered the same subject as I was interested in and I found that a reasonable approach was suggested-why wouldn't that suffice for the PE?

Example 3 - For me, having an event planner handle the travel arrangements (including reimbursement to participants) and meeting room reservations (including payments to vendors) would be a great help, especially if I could funnel the money through a pooled fund (lead perhaps by FHWA) that would not be subject to the same contractual requirements as a pooled fund led by my state. This would allow me and my small staff to focus more on the subject of the exchange and less on the logistics.

C12. Is there anything else you would like to say about peer exchanges?

Example 1 - Conducting a Peer Exchange & participating in those of other states has been extremely valuable in improving our Research Program. I would like to see more flexibility in guidelines.

Example 2 - Peer Exchanges are worthwhile if they focus on how to help us improve delivering products and services and not on process. Deployment of research is a critical activity. Unfortunately, we sometimes spend more time on initiating research and not implementing the results of the research.

Example 3 - It's a good idea, but I think even a good idea can become ineffective if you feel forced to do it when you don't really need it. On the other hand, I know that some states would not pursue this at all, if it wasn't mandated by FHWA. There has to be an acceptable middle ground. I think a minimum interval of five years would be reasonable. States should be encouraged to have them more frequently if needed..

Example 4 - I think we need to find ways to make sure newer managers are being invited to a peer exchange. I think that RAC chairs should help facilitate this inclusion by checking in on who is doing peer exchanges, who's never been to one and to encourage this. If there is less support for it, perhaps FHWA could support 100% SPR fund use for the new state's participation in the exchange as their first "exchange."

Complete Transcript of Comments from open-ended questions.

C1J Other (Please Specify)

- 1 - Finding time for planning the peer exchange
- 2 - It is not clear to me the purpose of the Peer Exchange. Some parties want the Peer Exchange to be an audit according to FCR SPR requirements
- 3 - Logistics issues are always a problem when dealing with personnel from outside our own organization.
- 4 - After so many years, the need and purpose have disappeared.
- 5 - organizing the materials to support the agenda, scheduling and coordinating people, etc., will be a lot of work.
- 6 - We hired someone to facilitate the peer exchange. Worked well.

C2 Is there anything you would like to add regarding any of these peer exchange issues?

- 1 - Our research program is small with limited staff that are very busy with our research duties. My belief is that our program could get as much benefit from less resource intensive peer exchange activities - such as external participation in ancillary state research program (i.e. annual project selection) meetings.
- 2 - Peer Exchanges are an excellent tool if they are used properly to further the research agenda and not some other agenda. Best Practices and Peer Exchanges can be used to get the word out and solve critical questions for the transportation community.
- 3 - The Research Program was kind of in a holding pattern when I started in July. I have been working to get things moving forward. We've reestablished the department's Research Advisory Council, developed a process for soliciting project ideas, and selected new projects. We are also close to finalizing new master agreements with the universities and task orders for the new projects. This Spring we plan to work on updating the procedures for the research program and selecting new projects for FY 09. Once we have completed this work, I plan to schedule a peer exchange so we can get some feedback on the changes we've made and the things we still need to do.
- 4 - I think the guidance document is still adequate but if updated it should specifically allow more flexibility consistent with some of the more innovative peer exchanges that have been held recently. Exchange of manuals, review of them during the exchange and the annual followup are not routinely followed so should not be shown as requirements.
- 5 - Now that we have experienced peer exchange reviews over time they do not require as much effort should not necessarily need people from outside. I still maintain that peer exchanges can take place in broad, general forums such as RAC meetings (or other venues) and be just as effective if properly organized and structured. That would significantly reduce the logistics issues and make peer exchanges far more meaningful. Just to perform them periodically because of some rule makes no sense at all.
- 6 - Peer Exchanges become more difficult for established programs who only need to tweak processes.
- 7 - The greatest difficulty is finding the time to make all the necessary arrangements and coordinate the peer exchange. The Research Division lost its administrative support position several years ago.
- 8 - Peer Exchange, if needed by a state DOT, should be considered as an opportunity and not an unfunded mandate.

9 - Having hosted three peer exchanges, obvious topics for focus have been exhausted.

10 - At my DOT, our LTAP Center facilitates our peer exchange through a contract. They provide the facility, arrange travel, rooms, meals, etc. This allows us to participate in the exchange without distractions.

C7. Is there anything more you would like to add regarding any of these factors that may influence scheduling of a peer exchange?

1 - It all depends on the purpose of the peer exchange. State DOT Research Programs are very different and having a periodic peer exchange is great, but what is FHWA expecting. We have received considerable oversight for our Research Program because we are in the process of developing a Strategic Research Plan that has taken about 3 years. FHWA is very inflexible about changing your research processes and not documenting the changes in the Research Manual.

2 - My research program is very small and it's not a high priority for the DOT.

3 - As a new Research Program manager, I think the peer exchange process will be helpful. In some cases, it may be valuable to do a peer exchange shortly after a change in leadership. In my particular case, however, I would rather have some time (like a year) to make changes before having a peer exchange.

4 - I agree strongly with C6j

5 - My understanding of the frequency requirement is 3 to 5 years, not an absolute 3 years. Also there is no restriction to my knowledge on holding them more frequently than 3 years if needed or desired. We have held three peer exchanges to date (1996, 2000, 2004) and plan to host the fourth one in 2008. We have never held a full three day long peer exchange. All have been 2 days plus a closeout with management on the morning of the third day. Our FHWA Division Office has been supportive in every way.

6 - Peer exchanges should be for the betterment of a research program and not to comply with an arbitrary time frame. They should be focused on the needs of the organization and do not need a cast of thousands to participate. And they do not need to be for any set time period. Maybe they need to be every 1-2 years or maybe every 5-10 years. Let the managers decide. Some of the best peer exchanges have been (in my view) during the RAC meetings in general sessions. Those should be structured a little better and they should count equally as an effective and efficient way to manage a program and participate in peer exchanges. Get rid of the prescriptive requirements and let people manage as they deem appropriate. If we need peer exchanges fine-we conduct them. If we don't then so be it. FHWA does not need to publish guidelines on this matter.

7 - Under our Change Management program we are continually looking at process improvements. The Peer Exchange is a good mechanism to develop outsider input. This does not have to be periodic or within specific time periods. Again, we have a mature program which has had all the elements of program management in place for over 40 years.

8 - I really like the idea of working with FHWA Division Office when determining peer exchange need.

9 - I think scheduling depends on the individual situation in each state. For some of the smaller programs, having a peer exchange every 2-3 years is probably too much.

For state with larger programs, that may not be the case. Staff size is also a big factor in hosting a peer exchange. For those that only have a couple of people

working in the research office, it is more difficult to find the time to coordinate and make arrangements for the peer exchange. It is often easier to attend peer

exchanges hosted by another state. I like the idea of regional peer exchanges.

10 - C6h, does not apply

11- Forcing a peer exchange every three years (or other fixed interval) is not an effective management tool or efficient use of resources. The Research office should have the flexibility and discretion to schedule peer exchanges based on need, in cooperation with their FHWA Division office. Recognizing that there could be instances where an FHWA Division Office believes an exchange is needed and the DOT disagrees, I don't have a problem if the Divisions retain the power to require an exchange at some greater interval, say 5-6 years or within 3 years of a change in research program leadership. However, even that should be at the discretion of the Division Office and not automatic.

12 - Keep in mind states may have difficulty obtaining permission to travel to peer exchanges. RAC leadership along with FHWA may be able to help by providing substantiation that representative should participate in peer exchanges

13 - Should be held on an as needed basis.

14 - removing any timing requirement could allow for states to slip through the cracks and not hold one, but some flexibility in timing makes sense.

C9. Are there other non-standard peer exchange formats that you would like to suggest?

1 - While not a formal exchange, the monthly regional RAC conference calls end up serving as mini peer exchanges. In that setting we have the opportunity to submit agenda items and then discuss with the group how they handle certain situations in their state. In reality, it accomplishes in a short amount of time and with far less resources, what formal peer exchanges do. Because they are monthly we could have each state submit one management item each year and then focus on one during each monthly call.

2- I don't necessarily have anything to suggest, but I would like to see some out of the box thinking and would like to see FHWA relax their stringent requirements. As a part of my last peer exchange, I brought in 4 additional states via videoconferencing for a 4-hour session. It worked great.

3- One that gets senior leaders involved....to see value

4- I would be interested in participating in a "Regional Peer Exchange" to better network with and deal with Regional issues. Like the old annual meetings but it would not have to be every year.

5- A Research Manager who has participated in many other states peer exchanges should be exempt from holding peer exchange. The regional RAC meeting should be revived to replace peer exchange.

5- there is value in having the visiting exchange members able to interact with the various parties within the state being reviewed. And, brainstorming and interaction is important. Web-based exchanges will have significantly less value than in-person exchanges, and trying to combine states will only be valuable if the geographical proximity is such that many employees from each state being reviewed is able to travel to the selected location. A scanning tour to another state, to see their program, makes sense to a degree, and might be useful to obtain certain insights, but, again, it fails to include the people in the research program being reviewed. Also, the ability of the visiting team to interact with DOT leadership (non-research people), customers within and outside the Department, and related University people is only possible under the current format. It might make sense to allow some of these varied formats only for certain cases where specific issues are being evaluated or considered.

6- Every state is different; nevertheless, the important thing is that every five years or so, an exchange is a good way to sharpen your program.

7- I'm thinking of my need for a database to manage research project data - having a peer exchange isn't as important as hiring someone to take the best of other state systems that fit our need to develop our own. Point being that an in-depth review of a specific issue from the literature might be valuable and allow a state to gather information from more organizations than the few that are invited.

8- It might be valuable for state (neighboring or not) to have the chance to co-host a peer exchange on a topic of mutual interest. It seems you'd need to be careful to avoid stepping away from a peer exchange and into a mini-conference, but there could be considerable value.

9- One thing I have discovered is that some States do not require the big 3-day exchanges, either due to the size of the State program, or the focus of the exchange. We personally have not gone 3 days over the last two exchanges we did, because it was not needed. The option of doing collaborative exchanges, or traveling to a State and actually seeing how they do day to day work, is very important. However, due to some of the archaic rules that the FHWA has to live with, we are still stuck with "sit around the conference table" type exchanges. I agree that we need accountability, but at the same time flexibility. Due to the disparate ways each State operates, a "One Size Fits All" approach does not work.

C11 Do you have any comments regarding these or other suggestions that might make a peer exchange easier to organize and carry out?

1 - A best practices document should include executive-level summary on purpose and objectives.

2 - Regarding a best practices document, if it provided useful information, I'd be interested. Success stories would be of little interest unless they had specific, direct applicability to my program.

3 - Define the purpose and intent so that DOTs and FHWA have clear expectations of what the Peer Exchange should and should not be.

4 - I answered this as an "experienced" manager. My responses would be quite different for a "new" manager. I think a new manager should be required to receive RAC 101 training within one year of appointment and peer exchanges should be part of that training. A state should be 'conditionally' approved for certification until such training has been completed.

5 - Our Research Program is small. Currently, I am the only full-time staff assigned to the program. Given the small size of the program, we can't do everything that a large program does. It would be helpful to learn more about best practices for small programs.

6 - Selecting a Chair that has participated in previous peer exchanges and is a good communicator is one key to having a successful peer exchange.

7 - It is possible that reviewing the above items may be sufficient and consequently you would not have to do a PE. For instance if someone else PE covered the same subject as I was interested in and I found that a reasonable approach was suggested-why wouldn't that suffice for the PE?

8 - I suspect C10c (above) might not yield much as the guidelines are pretty stringent.

9 - Use of LTAP or tech transfer through UTC has been helpful.

10- At a RAC annual meeting in a town hall format, a number of people could get up and give positive or negative experience stories.

11- For me, having an event planner handle the travel arrangements (including reimbursement to participants) and meeting room reservations (including payments to vendors) would be a great help, especially if I could funnel the money through a pooled fund (lead perhaps by FHWA) that would not be subject to the same contractual requirements as a pooled fund led by my state. This would allow me and my small staff to focus more on the subject of the exchange and less on the logistics.

12- The most difficult thing about hosting a peer exchange is clearing a week in my own schedule. There's no remedy for that.

13- Peer Exchange training should definitely be included in RAC 101

14- The person who will be organizing our peer exchange will most likely not be the person attending RAC 101. So, some training and/or guidance would be helpful, but not in that venue. The other two ideas are great. It would also be useful, if it could be shared discretely, to have some performance feedback on various team members and external facilitators - were they good contributors in the last exchange they were involved with?

15- Often, the most important part of the exchange is the informal time spent networking after hours.

16- Don't recommend peer exchange training in RAC-101, for fear of drowning the new manager in too much information.

17- One of the best ways to learn to do a Peer Exchange is have a panel of very experienced to little experience. This way the new people are getting mentored right away. If a new member is hosting a peer exchange for the first time, contacting a similar State that has conducted a few exchanges for insights is very helpful.

C12 Is there anything else you would like to say about peer exchanges?

1 - Conducting a Peer Exchange & participating in those of other states has been extremely valuable in improving our Research Program. I would like to see more flexibility in scheduling guidelines.

2 - In general, more flexibility is required. The process should foster/encourage greater interaction with UTCs & International Transportation Agencies.

3 - Peer Exchanges are worthwhile if they focus on how to help us improve delivering products and services and not on process. Deployment of research is a critical activity. Unfortunately, we sometimes spend more time on initiating research and not implementing the results of the research.

4 - Managers who don't take advantage of them will never have a robust program.

5 - We should advocate to FHWA Leadership to advocate more flexibility in their Division Offices for oversight of peer exchanges. It appears that some Division Offices may be more restrictive than they need to be from the questions posed above.

6 - Let's move beyond the prescriptive approach to managing research that will be to everyone's benefit. PE's are a tool and if we need to use them we should do so. If not then let's come up with another way but enable the managers to have the responsibility and flexibility to do what is necessary.

7 - There is no doubt that peer exchanges are valuable to state DOT research programs; however, increased flexibility in the frequency of exchanges and format are needed as described above. FHWA needs to consider the overall goals of the peer exchange process and recognize that there are other ways to obtain those goals beyond the rigid guidelines developed more than 10 years ago. DOTs and their FHWA Division Offices are best equipped to assess the value of an exchange at any given time based on individual circumstances and need.

8 - face to face peer exchanges are very efficient in sharing information, not in favor of web conferencing

9 - Peer exchanges are valuable tools but we need flexibility to use them properly. In my state we have had two commissioners, and three chief engineers, and several scheduling issues. It would be helpful to take my peer exchange needs on the road to visit a state or states that have programs that are similar

size or have specific reorganizations in the same time period. Things need to settle down before we have a peer exchange. The system needs to be flexible to handle these kinds of things I want to learn about and borrow.

10- There should not be "one" way of peer exchange, or "one" way of managing research. We should be careful that we do not try homogeneous programs using "Best Practices".

11- It's a good idea, but I think even a good idea can become ineffective if you feel forced to do it when you don't really need it. On the other hand, I know that some states would not pursue this at all, if it wasn't mandated by FHWA. There has to be an acceptable middle ground. I think a minimum interval of five years would be reasonable. States should be encouraged to have them more frequently if the need arises.

12- My first and second peer exchanges were of very high value. The value of my third was substantially diminished, I think because much of what surfaced was repetitive of the prior exchanges. I want to be more strategic in planning my next peer exchange. If I keep to a three year interval, I will schedule my next peer exchange in the middle of a transitional time, which is both close to my retirement, and in the midst of some major research program changes. It would be far better to delay the next peer exchange so that it can (1) capture the success or failure of new initiative and (2) be of maximum benefit to my successor. Current rules do not give me that flexibility.

13- My DOT's research program has benefited greatly from peer exchanges. We have made numerous changes to our program based on ideas and recommendations from peer exchanges, including exchanges in other states as well as those we hosted. The peer exchange program should continue but more flexibility in the method of conducting exchanges, frequency, etc. should be considered.

14- Please note that this questionnaire was filled out by the Research Program Manager, not by the Engineer for Research, so the questions about years of experience, etc., reflect my background.

15- I think we need to find ways to make sure newer managers are being invited to a peer exchange. I think that RAC chairs should help facilitate this inclusion by checking in on who is doing peer exchanges, who's never been to one and to encourage this. Even new people can bring insight to the table (Matt Moore attended mine when brand new and provided some great input). I think a best practices document should encourage this. If there is less support for it, perhaps FHWA could support 100% SPR fund use for the new state's participation in the exchange as their first "exchange" (from the new state's budget).

16- I would very much like to be part of peer exchanges but I'm new and so it seems like a hard circuit to break into. It would be a tremendous learning opportunity for me as I grow into my role, and I can see some advantages to having the fresh eyes of a newbie like me on board. Any tips for how to get involved in other state's exchanges?

17- Get tired of the same basic format. After four exchanges, my mind tends to wander during discussions. I would like to visit other state research programs, like visiting someone else's home and getting decorating ideas. By seeing how other managers work, you can bring back ideas to make your own plant more efficient. Until you see you don't even know what questions to ask.