High Value Research Projects
Submittal Guidance
Research Impacts: Better-Faster-Cheaper
AASHTO Research Advisory Committee
[Value of Research Task Force](#)

Overview

Acting on the strategic plan of the AASHTO Standing Committee on Research (SCOR), the AASHTO Research Advisory Committee (RAC) asks states each year to identify and document recently completed "high-value" research (HVR) projects. RAC publishes an annual compilation of these projects in a document entitled *[Research Impacts: Better-Faster-Cheaper](#).* The document provides substantial value to states, serves as a quick reference to HVR projects from a given year, and helps eliminate or reduce duplication of research.

Every January, the Value of Research Task Force chair announces the solicitation notice to RAC for high value research projects. From these submittals, each of the four RAC regions selects its top four projects to form the *"AASHTO Research Sweet Sixteen Awards."* These projects are then featured in AASHTO events and other publications (such as *[Research Makes the Difference](#)* brochure) and are also the subject of a poster session and session at the Transportation Research Board (TRB) Annual Meeting. Research project awards are given to CEOs at the AASHTO Annual Meeting and to Research Managers at the AASHTO RAC/TRB Representative meeting.

The Value of Research Task Force has put together this guidance document to assist AASHTO-RAC Research Managers and staff in the selection and submittal of High Value Research projects from their state. Each state is encouraged to submit as many high value research projects as appropriate. The goal is for each state to contribute at least one high value research project each year.

This guidance document also outlines the criteria that should be used for the state's selection of high value research projects and clarifies how the "Research Sweet Sixteen" projects are selected.

HVR Submittal Timeline and Deadline

States must submit projects through the **[High Value Research (HVR) website](#)** by **March 31** of a given year. Project submittals after this date will not be accepted. The Value of Research chair sends out the HVR solicitation notice and coordinates with the RAC regional chairs on getting the HVR projects entered into the HVR website.
The RAC region chairs encourage all states within their region to submit HVR projects and participate in the voting process.

HVR Solicitation sent out mid - January → HVR projects submitted to **[HVR website](#)** by March 31 → Region Chairs submit top 4 projects by May 15

General Guidance for High Value Research Submission

1. Consider selecting research projects when the value or benefit of the research has been quantified or qualified.
   a. Implementation of the research results will lead to defined benefits (quantified or qualified) for the sponsor agency that outweighs the cost of the research and implementation.
   b. Project implementation has led to significant changes in agencies, positively impacting the conduct of business. The changes may also be adapted to other agencies across the local, state or federal levels.
   c. The state or other appropriate agencies are making demonstrated progress in implementing the results of the research or otherwise following the project recommendations.
2. The project addresses a demonstrated need, answers specific questions or deals with documented problems relating to the state transportation agencies and its practices.
3. The project clearly identified and fulfilled its objectives.
4. The research results are technically valid and directly support the project recommendations.
5. Research results and implementation activities display innovation. If a project is similar to parallel or past efforts, the nominee should note how the project promotes advancement beyond other results.
6. **Consider research projects that have supplemental information and supportive materials (technical summary, video, pictures, technical brief, benefits summary, etc.) to help support and tell the research story.**
   a. Relevant files can be uploaded as attachments in RPM. Please follow Step 10 in the HVR Submittal Instructions. Keep files names short (avoid unnecessary punctuation).
      i. Image files (such as photos, pictures, tables, or charts) can be integrated into your HVR record abstract after submission.
      ii. Text documents (such as briefs, summaries or reports) cannot be integrated (or included) in the final *Research impacts* document. They may however accompany the report distributed to a region prior to voting.
   b. **Remember to add a note to the editor in the HVR text indicating that an attachment is available and where it should be inserted.**
   c. **Please be aware that you can only view your own attachments in RPM. You cannot view submittals or attachments from other states.**

Minimum Criteria for Project Submittal

States may submit any research project with the following qualifications:

1. A state can submit any research project completed by **March 31** having significant value or benefit to the department. Research projects that are still in-progress should <u>not</u> be submitted. Research projects previously submitted should not be resubmitted.
2. As implementation of results may take years, projects submitted should have been completed within the last five years.
3. A state may submit completed research projects on which it served as the lead contracting agency, regardless of the funding source. This includes projects fully or partially funded through SPR, UTC, state, local or pooled funds or any other sources.

4. States may combine multiple related or phased projects into a single entry, provided that at least one of the projects fits qualifications 1, 2 and 3 above.

Recommended Regional "Sweet Sixteen" Selection Process

This guidance was put together to help standardize the process, but regions can make modifications to the recommended selection process at their own discretion. Review and voting for the Sweet 16 takes place from April 1 through April 30 and is conducted at a regional level.

RAC Region Chairs must submit the region's "Sweet 16" projects by **May 15** so that the states may make preparations to present projects and be recognized at the RAC / TRB State Representatives Annual Meeting that typically is held in July.

Recommended steps in the voting process:

Step 1: After March 31 submittal deadline, Regional chairs will coordinate the regional voting process. The region's HVR submittals may be downloaded from the HVR website.

Step 2: The RAC regional chair compiles the HVR projects for their region from the HVR website and facilitates the voting for the top four research projects. Recommended process:

- Members should rank the region's top four projects 1st through 4th.
- Members are not allowed to include one of their own HVR in the ranking vote.

Step 3: The rankings are averaged and the top four projects are selected. Only four HVR projects can be submitted per region and must come from different states. The regional chair will determine which HVR projects are submitted as part of the Sweet 16 projects.

States should also take these factors into consideration when rating projects:

- Projects may address areas of expertise that are not common to all state DOT research managers. Research managers may have backgrounds in engineering, safety, planning, finance, public administration or other fields. Project applications should be written for a wider audience beyond a technical practitioner level.
- Similarly, research managers should be careful not to be naturally biased when rating projects that fall into their own expertise. To help address this concern, research managers may want to seek the advice of others in their agency to review and rate projects.
- Projects may address topical or business areas that are not represented in all state DOTs. For example, only a portion of state DOTs handle motor vehicle functions, but some DOTs fund policy or safety-related research that relate to motor vehicle activities. Applications should underscore the impact of the research on the sponsoring agency, even if that business function is not common to other state DOTs. Evaluators should take this into account and review projects based on the merit to the sponsor agency, even if their own agency may not have an application for the research.
- Evaluators should understand the impacts of projects considering both breadth and depth. For example, one project may have a minor impact across a wide range of applications. Another project might have a major impact in a single or small set of applications. Either project may be considered to have high value.