

AASHTO – RAC Value of Research Taskforce
May Meeting
Wednesday, May 8, 2019
11 a.m. – 12 noon CDT

Welcome – Introductions & Roll Call

Anne Freeman called the meeting to order at 11:05 a.m. CDT and called the roll.

Attendees:

Amy Kosanovic	Brian Hirt	Gir NJDOT
Ken Chambers	Anne Freeman	Gary Hook
Carol Aldrich	Dale Peabody	
Ann Scholz	Diane Thompson	

Review & Approval of November Meeting Minutes & Action Items

Amy put the meeting minutes up on the screen to view. Anne quickly went through the items from the minutes. She asked for questions and there were none.

Motion – Amy Kosanovic Second – Carol Aldrich

Update HVR Submissions

86 projects submitted this year. Down from the last two years. David Jarrett said not to focus on the number but the quality of the submission. Are we all happy with the submittal?

Ann S was wondering why numbers were lower and if it's because of the new research managers. Could we have onboarding to go through why this was important.

Dale Peabody thinks Ann S is correct and agrees with the onboarding concept. Originally the idea was to encourage everyone to submit something where their project that would have value and be used. Maybe putting too much focus on competition of Sweet Sixteen, but we want to have the value. He wouldn't be too concerned with the numbers and agrees with David Jarrett.

Brian Hirt heard that some states were encouraged to only submit a few projects instead of many. Maybe look at the number of states who have participated over the number of projects.

Carol Aldrich mentioned that in Region 3, they limit the submission by state to 4 project since some years were very large and the review took too much time.

Anne pointed out that maybe we need to review VoR Guidance overall.

Strategic Plan Update

Anne wanted Ann to inform to all of us where we were with the plan. Ann worked on this with Enid and Linda. Turned it into three objectives with action items for each. Could resources be linked to the action items?

The one thing since then is that PM&Q doesn't have performance measures. Ann shared with Emily P. about Research Project Performance Measures. Ann plans to be a part of the work group.

Anne feels we need much more discussion toward these measures. Maybe discuss with Emily at Summer meeting.

The other thought Ann had was looking through old files, she found a strategic plan for SCORE and their goals and how everything was categorized with the task forces. Recently R&I has updated their strategic plan. Maybe we should look at that and capture those ideas in the VoR strategic plan. Each goal is broken down into strategies.

Anne will make this an agenda item for the summer meeting. Dale has been thinking about this as well. They looked at the SCORE strategic plan in the past. Definitely the time to see how VoR aligns. Task forces need to compare and align.

By-Laws Discussion

Anne asked if VoR has any by-laws? The reason she asked is because states asked if they could put a Sweet Sixteen submission past the deadline. Other states wanted to pull projects that were submitted. She now feels that we should allow DOTs to submit. If we are trying to encourage people to submit, we need to have guidelines or by-laws where the decisions can be made. Anne wanted concerns to come up through the regions.

Ann S. HVR guidelines state on the website that the date of submission is March 31st of each year. Ann likes the regional chair to allow it. Then that regional chair could include the later projects in their own ballot and not have to worry about website concerns.

Anne F. feels that to just to say no, if we're trying to maintain a program, there are gray areas to where it should be allowed. Ultimately, it can't be Anne making decisions without open dialog from the task force. It takes time and effort to work through these issues.

Anne asked if Ken Chambers has a perspective. Ken feels leaving it up to the regional chairs makes it unfair. He thinks the consistent date is huge. He thinks it should continue to be a solid date. He would rather make sure announcements and support happen more before the deadline and then stick to the deadline.

Carol Aldrich recommends keeping the March 31st deadline firm but loves the idea of being proactive and sending out reminders early so everyone has time to prepare. In her opinion it becomes very convoluted and unclear if we change the dates and rules along the way.

Anne F. felt it was hard since it was an active DOT, but maybe we need to stick to the hard no.

Dale wanted the consistency to focus on the deadline. Submittals past the deadline could still be submitted but then they would not be eligible for the Sweet Sixteen competition piece.

Anne feels this couldn't be decided on the call. Do we have by-laws? Dale doesn't think the task forces has by-laws but that RAC does.

Anne liked Dale's idea to at least allow some submission for the greater good.

Ann S. pointed out that the by-laws was entitled RAC Operating Guidelines, updated in 2016.

Sweet Sixteen HVR Submittal Process

Anne said each region is voting on projects by May 15th. Some confusion because Bridges and other structures/Hydrology became the supplemental process. Anne asked Ken Chambers how it was going? He felt it was good and felt like a shorter review time was better. He reiterated that communication about the process would be better beforehand, including what the supplemental projects would be.

Anne said to maybe have a more strategic plan of announcements. Over the six-week timeframe, send out a weekly reminder. Ken thought the announcements were good, but he wanted clear communication on the supplemental topics were. Anne thought that we would not know the supplemental topics until the end. Ken was not aware that was how it was selected. Brian and Ann S. confirmed it is at the end of the actual submittals. Anne feels we need to explain that process. This really shows where the gaps are.

Ann S. wants us to discuss the supplemental brochures at the summer meeting. Anne said they would have a May 15th meeting about funding for the brochures. How did the brochure process come into play? Dale feels like we did this about every year. NCHRP had some work with CTC and it seemed like a logical place for the work to be done. Brian said it's been done since 2009 through contract with NCHRP 20-44, and in 2012 the brochures were aligned with Sweet Sixteen process.

Dale asked if based on the meeting next week, will a decision be made? Anne confirmed and would announce to the Task Force.

Anne asked Brian if there was a line item for the brochure? Brian confirmed yes and then the supplemental brochures were added later.

Ann S. still has an idea. Region 1 didn't have any competition. Her concern was could we make the competition more national than regional for the supplemental brochures? Maybe a different scoring scale? Anne F. thought it was a great idea. Carol Aldrich also liked the idea of having a national (rather than regional) type supplemental award especially if there isn't a solid group of projects to vote on.

Summer Meeting

Anne thinks the meeting is on Tuesday morning from 10:30-12 noon. Anne asked Cameron from Utah DOT to present on the Value of Research. Also we have new guidance from FHWA on

high value of research. His presentation will be about 30 minutes. Anne has also been contacted by Neil on the poster presentations for the Summer meeting.

Carol Aldrich mentioned she will not be attending the summer meeting and Michael Townley will be attending from Michigan. She wanted to know if there will be any way to call into the VoR meeting on Tuesday?

Certificates

Anne asked about the certificates for winners? Do we need to rename them? Different than Sweet Sixteen? Let's discuss this at a later time. When should we decide it? Now or later?

Wrap Up & Close

Anne asked for any other business. There was none. Anne asked for a motion to close.

Motion – Amy Kosanovic Second – Ken Chambers

We adjourned at 12 noon CDT. Conference Calls are bi-monthly on the second Wednesday at 11 am to noon CST. The next conference call will be held at the Summer Meeting.