

## **Behavioral Traffic Safety Cooperative Research Program Operating Guidelines**

Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (MAP-21), Subsection 402(c) created the National Cooperative Research and Evaluation Program (NCREP). NCREP was continued in the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act. The Program is to be administered by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) and jointly managed by the Governors Highway Safety Association (GHSA) and NHTSA. Funding was set at \$2,500,000 and is withheld from the Section 402 grant program each Federal Fiscal Year (FFY). Project selection began in FFY 2014 and continues annually. From FFY 2014 through FFY 2017 the program was administered by NHTSA with assistance from the Volpe National Transportation Systems Center. Beginning in FFY 2018, NHTSA remains the administrator but has modified its agreement with GHSA who in turn entered into an agreement with the National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine's Transportation Research Board (TRB) to manage the research activities. The name of the program was changed to Behavioral Traffic Safety Cooperative Research Program (BTSCRCP) in 2017 (pending approval of the GHSA Executive Board) to clarify its purpose and to distinguish it from other TRB research programs.

The Operating Guidelines establish policy for the conduct of the affairs of BTSCRCP including its Governing Board, GHSA Research Committee Duties and Responsibilities, Research Project Solicitation and Selection Process, TRB Roles and Responsibilities, Expert Panel Appointment and Selection Procedures and Research Agency Selection Process.

### **Governing Board**

The GHSA Executive Board serves as the Governing Board for BTSCRCP. The Board consists of officers, representatives from the 10 NHTSA regions and committee and task force chairs. Officers are elected by the full State Highway Safety Office membership during GHSA's Annual Meeting. Regional representatives are selected during regional caucuses. The GHSA Chair appoints the chairs of GHSA's various committees and task forces who serve as at-large board members. All Board Members serve a one-year term. At the Board's discretion, NHTSA, TRB and other relevant stakeholders may be invited to attend selected meetings for TRB to provide project status reports, share research projects findings and address any questions or concerns about the program.

### **GHSA Research Committee Duties and Responsibilities**

The Chair of the GHSA Executive Board appoints the Chair of the Research Committee who serves as an at-large member of the Governing Board. The purpose of the Research Committee is to monitor and facilitate the activities of BTSCRCP. Its ultimate goal is to oversee a quality research program that is committed to addressing research issues facing the State Highway Safety Offices and to promote research findings that improve highway safety.

### ***GHSA Research Committee Chair***

The duties shall include the following:

- Serve as a liaison between the GHSA Research Committee and the Governing Board.
- Appoint 5-7 members to serve on the Research Committee.
- Attend GHSA Executive Board meetings and provide BTSCRП updates and status reports.
- Attend GHSA Annual Meeting and give a status report to the general membership.
- Convene and preside at meetings/conference calls between Research Committee members and/or research project administrators (NHTSA) and managers (Transportation Research Board).
- Send communications to State Highway Safety Offices alerting them about research project solicitation requests, expert panel nominations and associated deadlines.
- Oversee the BTSCRП research solicitation, rating and selection process.
- Oversee the development of a process to identify ongoing and planned behavioral research.
- Make recommendations for BTSCRП Operating Procedure revisions and present to the Governing Board for their consideration.

### ***GHSA Research Committee Members***

The Research Committee shall have the following responsibilities.

- Participate in Research Committee Chair-initiated meeting and conference calls.
- Work with Research Committee Chair and the State Highway Safety Offices to encourage the development of research problem statements.
- Review and assist in revising research problem statement, calendar year processes and timeline chart, and other documentation as requested.
- Offer amendments to the Operating Guidelines for consideration by the Research Committee Chair and Governing Board.
- Provide advice and recommendations on highway safety research matters to the Research Committee Chair.
- Be an advocate for highway safety research by promoting the value of research, the implementation of research results, the transfer of new technologies and the benefits of serving as a member of a project expert panel.

### **Research Project Solicitation and Selection Process**

Each year the Research Committee will facilitate the development of a research project solicitation and selection process timeline chart. The chart will include at a minimum a step-by-step solicitation and selection process including action items, due dates and responsible person(s) or agency. This chart will be reviewed by all interested parties including GHSA, NHTSA and TRB staff to assure completeness and to clarify responsibilities.

Anyone can write or contribute to preparing a problem statement in conjunction with a State Highway Safety Office. However, only State Highway Safety Offices, GHSA Executive Board members, GHSA Committees, or NHTSA can submit a problem statement to BTSCR. P.

NHTSA and TRB staff will review the submitted research project ideas and provide feedback to the Governing Board. The Governing Board gives final approval of the timeline chart and the annual research projects.

### **TRB Roles and Responsibilities**

TRB will provide the day-to-day management and administration of the research projects. Each research project will be assigned to a technical oversight panel, and will be conducted by a research contractor (e.g., university, consulting firm). Specific tasks will include:

1. Appointing and coordinating expert technical panels to guide each research project;
2. Developing and distributing Requests for Proposals (RFPs);
3. Processing and evaluating proposals to select the best-qualified research agencies;
4. Executing contracts with the selected researchers;
5. Guiding the research;
6. Reviewing research reports;
7. Publishing and disseminating research reports; and
8. Promoting the application of research results.

Each project will be assigned to a panel, appointed by the Transportation Research Board, which will provide technical guidance and counsel throughout the life of the project. Panels will be appointed according to the procedures established for the BTSCR. P. and TRB's other cooperative research program project panels; panel appointments and report review for these activities are subject to approval by the TRB Subcommittee on National Research Council (NRC) Oversight.

### **Expert Panel Appointment and Selection Procedures**

The Transportation Research Board organizes panels of experts to provide guidance on technical aspects of each research project and to translate the problems into project statements with well-defined objectives. An announcement for a call for nominations will be sent to each State Highway Safety Office by GHSA and placed on the TRB website. State Highway Safety Office nominations as well as self-nominations are considered for panel membership. GHSA and NHTSA staff will review nominations for each project and provide TRB input on the candidates. Criteria for panel selection include geographic distribution, a mix of expertise (practitioner and researcher), life experiences (age, race, and gender) and employment (public, private, and academic sectors). The final selection of the 5-6 member panel will be made by TRB with a goal of including at least one GHSA member. Non-voting liaisons from TRB and NHTSA will be invited to serve on each project panel.

The panel members serve over the life of the project whether they remain in their current position or not (unless they move to a position that would create a conflict of interest). Their key responsibilities include:

- Provide technical guidance;
- Review Requests for Proposals;
- Recommend awards; and
- Review and revise reports for acceptability and for accomplishment of the project objectives and research plan.

TRB staff will organize and facilitate each panel meeting. All allowable travel expenses are covered by TRB. Panel members typically have three meetings during the project. These meetings may be a combination of face-to-face and web-enabled teleconferences. Meeting one crafts the Research Problem Statement into a Request for Proposal (RFP), meeting two selects the proposal/contractor from the submitted RFPs, and meeting three discusses the interim report and the remaining tasks.

### **Research Agency Selection Process**

BTSCRIP researchers will be selected using an open process that allows all potential research agencies to compete on the basis of technical merit, and ensures that all proposers are treated fairly and that the program has access to the best talent available for each project. In evaluating proposals from potential research contractors, project panels will consider the following:

1. The proposer's demonstrated understanding of the problem;
2. The merit of the proposed research approach and experiment design;
3. The experience, qualifications, and objectivity of the research team in the same or closely related problem area;
4. The plan for promoting application of results;
5. The proposer's plan for participation by Disadvantaged Business Enterprises – small firms owned and controlled by minorities or women; and
6. The adequacy of the research facilities.