South Carolina Department of Transportation  
Engineering Directive Memorandum

Number:  55

Primary Department:  Construction

Referrals:  23 Code of Federal Regulations, Part 420
          23 United States Code
          43 United States Code
          48 Code of Federal Regulations, Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR)
          49 Code of Federal Regulations, Parts 18 and 19
          Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circular A-21
          Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circular A-133
          Title 57, Code of Laws of South Carolina
          Chapter 63, South Carolina Code of Regulations
          Departmental Directive 13
          Departmental Directive 41
          SCDOT Research Manual

Subject:  Procurement and Administration of Federally Funded Research

State Planning and Research (SPR) funds received by state DOTs are administered by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). A portion of these funds are set aside for use in research, development, and technology transfer (RD&T) activities in the SPR Part II Program. Federal guidelines for use of these funds, as outlined in 23 CFR 420.209, require state DOTs to establish a management process for identification and prioritization of RD&T activities to address transportation issues in their organizations.

In accordance with requirements for use of SPR funds for RD&T activities, SCDOT has developed a research management process that is documented in the SCDOT Research Manual. This process and manual were approved by SCDOT’s Research and Development Executive Committee and the FHWA. Research topics will be solicited and projects selected for funding as outlined in the approved management process. The Deputy Secretary for Engineering will approve the prioritized list of selected projects. The list of approved projects will be submitted to the Commission at the next succeeding meeting for information and included in the SPR Part II Work Program submitted to the FHWA.

Research projects will be developed in the approved prioritized order. A Steering and Implementation Committee, composed of SCDOT personnel with expertise in the subject area as well as a representative from the FHWA, will be formed for each research project. This committee will select the principal investigator in accordance with the approved management process as defined in the SCDOT Research Manual. Whenever possible, proposals for a project will be solicited from multiple in-state institutes of higher education for consideration. Qualification based selection will be used for selecting principal investigators. Selection will
utilize criteria that measure expertise of the researcher, understanding of the problem, proposed research approach, implementation plan, and other criteria unique to the specific project. If expertise in the subject matter for an approved research project resides at only one in-state institute of higher education, the committee will request a proposal and pursue developing the project with that institute.

If a Steering and Implementation Committee determines that a state or federal agency, such as the United States Geological Survey (USGS), is best suited to conduct a research project due to their particular expertise, availability of specialized equipment required for a study, etc., the committee will request a proposal and pursue developing the project with that government agency.

Negotiations will be conducted after the principal investigator is selected and the approach to performing the research is agreed upon and finalized by the Steering and Implementation Committee and the principal investigator. Negotiation procedures are documented in the SCDOT Research Manual.

Once the proposal is finalized, Office of Materials and Research staff will prepare a Commission Agenda Transmittal Form requesting approval of the agreement for the research project and forward through appropriate channels for submission to the Commission. Once approved by the Commission, contracts will be executed by the Chief Engineer for Operations.

If a Steering and Implementation Committee determines that the scope of the research may require specialized expertise or equipment not normally available at institutes of higher education, the committee can request that the research project be advertised. Office of Materials and Research staff will determine if the procurement should follow the exempt or non-exempt process as identified in Departmental Directive 13. If exempt, procurement for the research project will follow the qualifications based process outlined in Departmental Directive 41. If non-exempt, procedures outlined in Departmental Directive 13 will be used for the procurement.

Administration of executed SPR research contracts will be handled at the Office of Materials and Research in accordance with the approved management process as outlined in the SCDOT Research Manual and in compliance with all state and federal requirements.

Approved by: John V. Walsh

John V. Walsh, Deputy Secretary for Engineering

Effective Date: September 7, 2012