

# South Carolina Department of Transportation

## Engineering Directive

**Directive Number:** ED-55 **Effective:** June 27, 2023

**Subject:** Procurement and Administration of Federally Funded Research

**References:**

- 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
- S.C. Code of Laws, Title 57
- S.C. Code of Regulations, Chapter 63
- Departmental Directive 41
- SCDOT Research Manual

**Primary Department:** Construction

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, the South Carolina Department of Transportation (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 Secretary of Transportation 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, 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 Secretary of Transportation Record of Approval Form and forward through the appropriate channels to execute an agreement.

If a Steering and Implementation Committee determines that the scope of the research may require specialized expertise or equipment not normally available at an in-state institute 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 41 and then proceed accordingly.

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.

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Recommended by: Randall Young, P.E.  
Chief Engineer for Project Delivery

Approved by: Leland Colvin, P.E.  
Deputy Secretary for Engineering

History: Issued on September 9, 2011  
First Revision on September 7, 2012  
Second Revision on June 27, 2023