

Pooled Fund Projects: TAC's Collaborative Model



2013

Introduction

The Transportation Association of Canada is a national association with a mission to promote the provision of safe, secure, efficient, effective, environmentally and financially sustainable transportation services in support of Canada's social and economic goals. About connecting knowledge and people, TAC's council and committee structure provides fora where hundreds of transportation professionals gather and exchange ideas, information and knowledge on technical transportation issues. Through those discussions, needs are often identified for research, development and state-of-the-art tools, guidelines and practices. TAC's pooled fund project model is the means by which members collaborate to address those needs and conduct work of mutual interest.

Under the pooled fund model, TAC members and others are offered opportunities to consider providing financial support, according to their level of interest, to specific projects developed through the volunteer committee structure. The approach has proven to be successful; in the decade since it was first adopted, over 70 projects have been undertaken, more than \$6 million has been invested and 50 different funding partners have been involved.

The Benefits of Collaboration

Funding partners cite many benefits of their financial and in-kind contributions to the pooled fund project program. These benefits include the ability to leverage research funds and stretch limited budgets, gain broader perspectives, and work with experts from around the country on specific topics and issues of interest. In many cases, it has also proven beneficial to have work conducted and products published under TAC's name, a recognized national association in the transportation sector.

Benefits to TAC councils and committees are also apparent. Worthy projects do not compete for funds from a single source. As a result, debate and disagreement about priorities is minimized and projects can move more quickly from conception, through conduct, to completion. Furthermore, the value of a project and the need for it in the transportation sector is easily assessed by the commitments made to it by public and private sector organizations.

In this Document

The following sections describe TAC's role in pooled fund projects and the guiding principles set by the Board of Directors for the program. A chart is provided that identifies the steps of pooled fund project development and conduct as well as the responsibility of standing committees, councils, the secretariat, project steering committees and consultants for each of those steps.

In Appendix A, a form is provided that identifies the information needed to support a new project recommendation. A checklist is also included that project proponents can use to consider climate change aspects that may be relevant to the project.

The rights and requirements of funding partners and the TAC secretariat with respect to pooled fund projects and their products are described in Appendix B.

Appendix C provides conflict of interest guidelines for participants in TAC meetings, and in particular with respect to the development and conduct of pooled fund projects.

TAC's Role in Pooled Fund Projects

TAC provides a fertile environment for development and conduct of cooperative projects by providing:

- a variety of fora for transportation professionals to share perspectives and identify projects or issues of mutual interest,
- a network of leading experts in the transportation sector to contribute to or validate projects,
- an institutional mechanism for pooling resources, contracting and managing collaborative initiatives,
- a professional staff to manage or undertake projects, and
- a recognized, credible "name" in the Canadian and international transportation community.

Guiding Principles

- TAC pooled fund projects must respect TAC's mandate and must not advocate policy positions.
- TAC will strive to support the individual and collective interests of its membership, and will offer flexibility in approaches and mechanisms to address these interests.
- TAC is a catalyst in support of building and supporting cooperative initiatives.
- TAC provides the most efficient and effective process for conduct of cooperative transportation related studies and initiatives in Canada.
- TAC's Board of Directors, via the Executive Committee, retains control over the use of TAC's name and may delegate this authority to its Councils.
- When given the authority by, and reporting to, the TAC Board of Directors, TAC councils may conduct TAC projects within their mandates and TAC's vision, mission and policies.
- The Chief Engineers' Council of TAC is responsible for the development, approval and maintenance of national technical transportation guidelines and best practices for the design, construction, maintenance and operation of the road infrastructure in Canada.
- Pooled fund projects carried out under TAC's name, and the resulting products, will become the property of the association.
- Pooled fund projects carried out under TAC's name will be managed by the TAC Secretariat.
- Funding partners of cooperative undertakings must retain control over management and conduct of the initiative through the project steering committee.
- Pooled fund projects not carried out under TAC's name, and the resulting products, remain the property of the funding partners.
- Volunteer resources of TAC will not be exploited to conduct non-TAC projects; however, TAC members may choose to volunteer to participate on non-TAC projects.
- TAC Secretariat's priority will be the conduct and management of TAC projects although where available, TAC Secretariat's resources may be allocated to non-TAC projects.
- The budgets for all pooled fund projects should include provision for full costing of resources required from the association and its secretariat including:
 - Use of secretariat resources and staff,
 - Direct costs associated with project conduct and management,
 - Consultant costs, and
 - Translation of reports or executive summaries.
- The budgets for pooled fund projects which will result in products being delivered to TAC for publication and distribution should not include costs of printing, promotion or distribution, as these will be recovered by TAC through sales and possibly advertising.
- It is desirable to have all TAC reports published in both official languages; however there may be cases where only the report's executive summary will be translated.

Pooled Fund Projects: Steps in Development, Conduct and Delivery

	Lead Responsibility					Project Step
	Standing Committee	Council/ Board Task Force	Secretariat	Steering Committee	Consultant	
1	✓	✓				Raised by individual(s) or through discussion during a meeting, an issue, research or product need is identified. A decision is made to recommend a pooled fund project.
2	✓	✓				A project description is developed. A form is provided in Appendix A that describes the information needed to support the project recommendation.
3	✓	✓				The level of effort for a consultant assignment is estimated.
4	✓	✓				A recommendation to proceed with a funded project is made to the oversight council/board task force.
Council/Board Task Force approval required to proceed.						
5			✓			Board endorsement of the project concept is sought.
Board endorsement required to proceed.						
6			✓			Management and translation costs are estimated.
7			✓			Potential funding partners are invited.
To proceed, sufficient funding must be committed to cover all project costs relating to consultant assignment, TAC management, and translation of deliverables.						
8			✓			Invoices are issued to project funding partners.
9			✓			Funding partners are invited to appoint a representative to the project steering committee.
10			✓			A TAC project manager is named.
11				✓		The project steering committee develops the project plan and terms of reference for the consultant assignment. The TAC project manager and library staff can assist with preliminary topical literature scans and drafting the terms of reference.
12			✓			Directed by the project steering committee, the TAC project manager solicits letters of interest and/or proposals from consulting and academic community.
13				✓		A consultant is selected to conduct the project.

	Lead Responsibility					Project Step
	Standing Committee	Council/ Board Task Force	Secretariat	Steering Committee	Consultant	
14			✓			A contract is prepared and signed. Over the life of the project, the TAC project manager monitors milestones, accepts invoices and authorizes payments to the consultant in accordance with the contract.
15			✓			During the project, at the direction of the steering committee chair, the TAC project manager convenes meetings, issues agendas, prepares and circulates minutes.
16				✓		At the direction of the steering committee, guests with specific expertise may be invited to participate in some meetings.
17					✓	The consultant participates in steering committee meetings when invited.
18					✓	The consultant submits progress reports and draft deliverables to the TAC project manager.
19			✓			The TAC project manager circulates material from the consultant to the steering committee.
20				✓		Steering committee members review consultant submissions throughout the project and provide comments to the TAC project manager.
21			✓			The TAC project manager compiles comments and circulates to the steering committee and the consultant.
22				✓		Final project deliverables are reviewed and approved on behalf of the funding partners.
Approval of the project steering committee is required to proceed.						
23				✓	✓	Presentation is made to committee that recommended the project.
24	✓					Decision to recommend project deliverables be published in TAC's name is made.
25	✓			✓	✓	Presentation to the oversight council/board task force is made and recommendation to publish in TAC's name is conveyed.
Council/Board Task Force approval is required to proceed.						
26			✓			TAC publication is edited and formatted.
27			✓			Publication is translated.
28			✓			Publication is priced and marketed.

Appendix A

Supporting Information for Recommending Pooled Fund Projects

Project Proposal

Proposed by:

Proposed to:

Project Title:

Background (Please describe the problem or issue that gives rise to the project proposal):

Major objectives to be achieved by the proposed project:

Key tasks to accomplish objectives (e.g. research, analyses, surveys, syntheses, etc.):

Final deliverables (e.g. briefing, research report, synthesis of practice, recommended practices, national guideline):

Anticipated resource requirements (value of consultant assignment and duration of consultant contract):

Potential funding partners:

Climate Change Checklist for TAC Committees

1. Have you considered projects your committee could undertake to address climate change issues (such as mitigation efforts and, or, adaptation activities)?
2. Have you ensured that the climate change component of your project is not duplicating material covered in previous projects, or other initiatives being carried out by other councils and committees? Have you considered other organizations that may have related initiatives underway?
3. Have you consulted with other councils and committees on your project for synergy on climate change initiatives (such as mitigation efforts and, or, adaptation activities)?
4. Have strategic transportation initiatives, emerging technologies and best practices relating to climate change been considered as part of your project?
5. Have you identified the following, and other, more likely effects of climate change and how your project or product could make a difference including adapting to such changes?
 - Changing water levels
 - Hotter drier summers
 - Melting permafrost
 - Extreme precipitation events
 - Coastal erosion
 - Warmer winters
6. Have you considered the following causes of climate change and what advice your project/product could offer?
 - Deforestation
 - Land surface changes
 - Urban sprawl
 - Fossil fuel use
7. Will your project/product provide data or methods to help mitigate the impacts of future climate change?
 - Various design options
 - Use of recycled materials
 - Adoption of new technologies
 - Low/lower carbon fuel usage
 - Optimized mix designs
 - Other
8. Will your project/product provide data or methods about location and design considerations, and other means to;
 - A) minimize the impact of climate change well into the future?
 - B) reduce the vulnerability of development to climate change?
 - C) quantify climate change impacts and benefits (e.g. economic)?

Mitigation: Actions or measures taken to reduce the impact the transportation system has on our climate (e.g. use of roundabouts vs. traffic signals to reduce greenhouse gas emissions).

Adaptation: Approaches and measures aimed at modifying transport activities and infrastructure in response to current and anticipated impacts of climate change. These can be either or both proactive and reactive, and may involve innovations that improve current practices.

Vulnerability: Susceptibility of infrastructure to conditions it was not originally designed to withstand (thereby reducing lifespan resulting in economic loss, disruptions, increased risks to public health and safety).

TAC Current Practices & Innovations Database: <http://library.tac-atc.ca/CPIDBsearch.htm>

Appendix B

Rights and Responsibilities with respect to TAC Pooled Fund Projects

Funding Partners' Rights and Responsibilities

As a matter of principle, the funding partners of a project have control over the scope and conduct of a project which they are funding, within the constraints of TAC's policies and procedures. That control is exercised through the project steering committee, which is formed exclusively of representatives of the project funding partners. Therefore, the first and foremost right of a project funding partner is to appoint one representative to the project steering committee (PSC).

Through their appointed representatives on the project steering committee, funding partners have the right to oversee the conduct of the project. The PSC is responsible for:

- Developing the project terms of reference,
- Reviewing project proposals and selecting a consultant,
- Receiving project status reports from TAC project management staff,
- Receiving draft documents developed by the project consultant,
- Providing comments on and direction for the work in progress,
- Overseeing the project schedule and consultant assignment budget, and
- Accepting or rejecting final project deliverables.

In addition to the important right to contribute to the guidance of the project, an individual or organization that contributes funding will be acknowledged as a funding partner in all project documentation, including TAC publications that may result. Partners receive a complimentary copy of the final project deliverables and publication and are also offered a one-time limited duration opportunity to purchase the publication at a discounted price.

Finally, all funding partners, regardless of their contribution, are considered equal members of the project steering committee. Funding partners can expect transparency in TAC's project management and to be treated equally in the process.

TAC Secretariat's Rights and Responsibilities

The TAC Secretariat has responsibility for many aspects of the conduct and management of pooled fund projects and also has certain rights pertaining to the products of the projects.

The Secretariat is responsible for:

- Securing funding from partners and managing the project budget,
- Entering into a contract with the consultant, selected by the PSC, to conduct the assignment,
- Supporting the project steering committee in its work,
- Arranging meetings, preparing minutes and taking necessary follow up actions,
- Acting as liaison between the consultant and PSC,
- Monitoring project timelines and budget in accordance with the contract on behalf of the project steering committee,
- Arranging translation of documents as necessary,
- Seeking approval of documents by relevant committees and councils prior to publication,
- Editing and formatting project reports for publication under the TAC name, and
- Marketing and managing sales of products emanating from projects.

TAC has the right to:

- Intellectual property, including copyright, on all documents, publications and other products resulting from the project,
- Retain the revenue from sales of publications and other products, and
- Develop and deliver seminars and workshops based on TAC products and retain revenue that results from those activities.

From time to time, TAC may enter into partnerships with other organizations to share some of the responsibilities associated with specific projects and may, in those cases, share revenue from publications and training products.

Appendix C

Conflict of Interest Guidelines

In pursuit of TAC's mission to be a neutral forum for gathering or exchanging ideas, information and knowledge, open and vibrant discussion is encouraged at all levels of the association. In those discussions, especially where funded projects are considered, it is essential that a transparent and equitable process be preserved that offers no unfair advantage to any participants. To that end, it is expected that all participants in activities and meetings of the Transportation Association of Canada will act to avoid real or apparent conflicts of interest.

As defined by the Canadian Society of Association Executives (December 2001):

Conflict of interest arises when an individual or organization considers choices in which conflicting interests or benefits exist. A duality of commitment exists. Conflict is present when the choice which provides personal benefit is selected over the choice most in accord with ethical principles and public interest. Such conflicts may involve financial benefits, enhancement of position, or other benefits to the individual. Disclosure of such conflicts prior to the process of choice is essential. Disclosure however per se, is inadequate if other means are used to inappropriately influence decision making.

The following sections provide examples of situations where conflicts of interest could arise, particularly in the development and conduct of funded projects. The lists should not be considered exhaustive. In such situations, the onus for declaration of real or perceived conflicts of interest rests with the individual. The fundamental requirement is to ensure that unfair advantage is not gained by one individual or organization¹ over another. Therefore, where appropriate and necessary to eliminate conflicts of interest, individuals are expected to withdraw from discussions or work that give rise to the conflict.

These guidelines are offered as a code of practice for individuals participating in the activities and meetings of TAC. The guidelines should be reviewed periodically by councils and standing committees, and specifically when new members join the discussions, to ensure that all members understand their content and have an opportunity to disclose potential conflicts of interest. Steering committees are expected to review the guidelines at the initiation of each project. In the event that an undisclosed conflict is discovered, the matter should be referred to the oversight council or the TAC Board of Directors for resolution.

Council, Task Force, Standing, Sub-Committee and Working Group Members

Discussion of potential projects should be open and inclusive of all members to the greatest extent possible. However, conflicts of interest could exist for council, standing, subcommittee or working group members in the following circumstances.

- The development of statements of project scope² or project descriptions³ is generally the responsibility of councils, standing committees, subcommittees or working groups. In such discussions, the onus for declaration of conflicts of interest rest with the individual members if

¹ In the context of these guidelines, "organization" can refer to an individual's employer(s), company(ies) agency(ies), association(s), or institution(s) which the individual represents at TAC meetings.

² The project scope provides a brief statement of a project to be undertaken, identifying the subject are and purpose of the project in terms of major deliverables (guideline, synthesis of practice, research report, etc.)

³ The project description is a brief document used to solicit funding for the project. It defines the project in general terms, explains the need for the project and highlights other relevant research or development activities relating to the subject matter of the project. The project description identifies the project objective(s), suggests goals for the project and recommends a level of effort for the consultant assignment.

participating in the development of project scope or descriptions would give the individual or his/her organization an unfair advantage over others. For example:

- The member or the member's organization might submit, or be included in, a proposal for the work.
 - The member is currently being advised or supervised by a professor who might submit a proposal for the work.
- Voting on project deliverables if:
 - The member or the member's organization acted as a consultant on the project.
 - The member or the member's organization was an unsuccessful proposer on the project.

Project Steering Committee Members

As a matter of principle, funding partners of a project have control over the scope and conduct of a project which they are funding, within the constraints of TAC's guidelines for pooled fund projects. Project steering committees are formed of representatives of the funding partners, and conflicts of interest would exist for project steering committee members when:

- Participating in the development of terms of reference⁴ for a project that would be pursued as a funded initiative with a consultant assignment if doing so would give the individual or his/her organization an unfair advantage over others. For example:
 - The member or the member's organization might submit, or be included in, a proposal for the work.
 - The member is currently being advised or supervised by a professor who might submit a proposal for the work.
- Submitting or helping to prepare proposals or receiving compensation for participation in a project under their jurisdiction.
- Participating in the proposal-evaluation process when any personal, corporate or financial gain is to be made. For example:
 - The member or the member's organization has a financial interest in one of the proposals.
 - The member or the member's organization is a contractor or consultant to one of the proposers.
 - The member serves on the Board of Directors (or similar policy-making body) of one of the proposers.
 - The member is currently being advised or supervised by a professor in one of the proposals.
 - The member is in the immediate family of one of the proposers.
- Serving on the steering committee if the contract is awarded to a proposer creating one of the situations listed above.

⁴ The project terms of reference are established by a project steering committee building upon the project scope and description. The terms of reference are issued to solicit letters of interest or proposals for consultant assignments and identify specific goals for the project, and may set out tasks to be undertaken or a recommended methodology to be followed, and establish a schedule for the consultant assignment.

- The member or the member’s organization has a commercial interest in the outcome of the research; for example, the member might work for a trade association or own a patent for a product that could be helped or hurt by the results of the research.
- Individuals are not disqualified from service on a project steering committee but are expected to disclose the following circumstances to the project steering committee and TAC staff:
 - The member serves, without compensation, on a committee providing technical advice to a proposer on matters unrelated to the project under the steering committee member’s jurisdiction.
 - The member is employed by the same agency as an individual listed as an independent consultant in one of the proposals.
 - The member is personally acquainted with a member of a proposing team.
 - The member’s agency currently employs one of the proposers as a contractor or consultant.
 - The member or the member’s organization was previously a contractor or consultant to one of the proposers.
 - The member appears to be in a position of control relative to an individual in one of the proposals; for example the member might be a thesis adviser or research sponsor to a member of the proposing team.

TAC Staff Members

To avoid conflicts of interest, TAC staff members do not:

- Help a proponent with proposal preparation or provide assistance that could jeopardize a fair competition; for example by reviewing parts of a proposal before submittal. Providing clarifications and general guidance to potential proposers would not be considered a conflict of interest.
- Accept compensation from potential proposers. This includes honoraria, consulting fees, or payment for teaching.
- Serve in unpaid advisory roles.
- Manage a particular project when a special relationship exists between the staff member and the project’s contractor or a member of the research team.

TAC Contractors

To avoid conflicts of interest, potential TAC contractors are required to:

- Include in their proposals a section labeled “Disclosure” including information on possible sources of significant financial or organizational conflict of interest in conducting the research. For example, under certain conditions, ownership of the proposing agency, other organizational relationships, or proprietary rights and interests could be perceived as jeopardizing an objective approach to the research effort, and proposers are asked to disclose any such circumstance and to explain how they will be accounted for in the study. The project steering committee considers this information when evaluating proposals.