

Guidelines for Pooled-Fund Projects

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About TAC

The Transportation Association of Canada (TAC) is a not-for-profit, national technical association that focuses on road and highway infrastructure and urban transportation. TAC is Canada’s premier source of information on planning, designing, building, operating and maintaining roads, highways and urban transportation systems, with an extensive catalogue of technical publications.

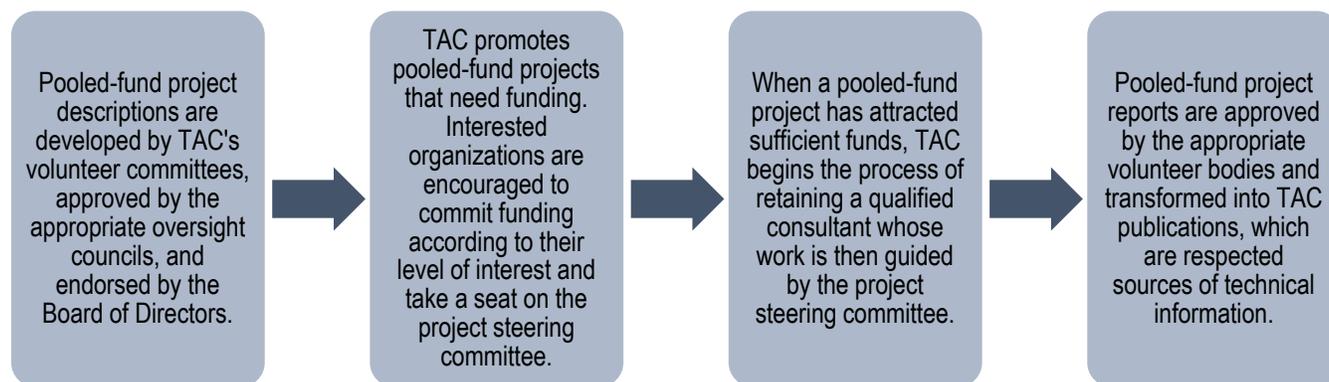
The Association’s 500 corporate members include all levels of governments, private sector companies, academic institutions, and other associations. TAC provides a neutral, non-partisan forum for those organizations, and their thousands of staff, to come together to share ideas and information, build knowledge, and pool resources in addressing transportation issues and challenges.

TAC is a fertile environment for developing and conducting collaborative technical projects. It provides:

- An extensive structure of volunteer councils and committees where transportation professionals share information and experiences, and identify mutual challenges
- A network of leading experts in the transportation sector to scope and validate new projects
- An institutional mechanism for pooling resources, contracting and managing collaborative initiatives
- A professional staff to manage or undertake projects
- A history of producing credible, trusted publications offering guidance to Canadian stakeholders

Overview of the pooled-fund project model

TAC's pooled-fund project model allows member and partner organizations to collaboratively produce national technical guidelines, syntheses of practice, and research reports. Over the last 20 years, TAC has worked with around 80 funding partners to undertake around 150 pooled-fund projects with an aggregate value of around \$15 million. This remarkable degree of success is testament to the benefits of the pooled-fund approach – through collaboration, funding organizations maximize the impact of their own resources and can leverage TAC's experience in managing collaborative projects and producing respected publications. They also give their staff the opportunity to participate on project steering committees, working closely with their peers and experts from across Canada. The following schematic shows an overview of the pooled-fund project model:



Guiding principles for TAC pooled-fund projects

- Pooled-fund projects must respect TAC's mandate and must not advocate policy positions. TAC strives to support the individual and collective interests of its membership, and offers flexibility in approaches and mechanisms to address those interests.
- TAC's Board of Directors (via its Executive Committee) retains control over the use of TAC's name and may delegate this authority to its Councils; when given the authority by the Board of Directors, TAC councils may conduct projects within their mandates and TAC's vision, mission and policies.
- The products of pooled-fund projects carried out under TAC's name become the property of the association, whereas the products of pooled-fund projects not carried out under TAC's name become the property of the funding partners.
- Pooled-fund projects are directed by project funding partners through the project steering committee, and managed by the TAC Secretariat.
- The TAC Secretariat prioritizes the conduct and management of projects carried out under TAC's name, but may allocate its resources to other projects where feasible. TAC's volunteer resources may not be exploited to conduct projects not carried out under TAC's name, but TAC member organizations and their employees may choose to participate in them.
- Pooled-fund project budgets provide for full costing of resources required from the Association and its Secretariat including staff time, project steering committee meeting expenses, consultant costs, translation of project materials, and the printing of final copies for funding partners. Costs related to publication printing, promotion and distribution are recovered by TAC through sales or advertising.
- The lead consultant for each pooled-fund project must be a TAC member organization, and no more than 20% of the consulting assignment budget may be assigned to subconsultants that are not TAC member organizations.
- TAC publishes national technical guides and briefings in both official languages, and endeavours to do the same for other types of publications; however, in some cases only the report summary will be translated into French.

Details of the pooled-fund project process

The following table identifies the stages, steps and lead actors in the development and delivery of pooled-fund projects that are conducted under TAC's name. For pooled-fund projects not conducted under TAC's name, steps 1-4 and 19-24 are not applicable.

Project stages and steps	Lead actors				
	TAC committee	TAC council/ task force reporting to the Board	TAC Secretariat staff	Project steering committee	Consultant
Pre-project					
1. An issue, challenge, research question or need for guidance is identified, and a proposed pooled-fund project description is developed, including the estimated level of effort for a consultant assignment.	✓	✓			
2. Management and translation costs are estimated.			✓		
3. The proposed pooled-fund project description is considered by the relevant committee and council/task force. <i>To proceed further, council/task force approval is required.</i>	✓	✓			
4. The approved pooled-fund project description is considered by the Board of Directors (via its Executive Committee). <i>To proceed further, Board endorsement is required.</i>			✓		
Project in development					
5. TAC member organizations and other potential partners are invited to commit funding. <i>To proceed further, sufficient funding must be committed to cover project costs relating to consultant assignment, TAC management activities, and translation.</i>			✓		
6. A TAC Secretariat project manager is named.			✓		
7. A project launch notification and invoice for committed funding are issued to each project funding partner.			✓		
8. Funding partners are invited to appoint representatives to the project steering committee.				✓	
9. Terms of reference for the consultant assignment are developed.			✓	✓	
10. Letters of interest and/or proposals are solicited by TAC from private-sector and educational institution member organizations.			✓		
11. A consultant is selected to conduct the project.				✓	
12. A contract is signed by TAC and the successful consultant.			✓		✓
Project in progress					
13. TAC's project manager monitors milestones, accepts invoices and authorizes payments to the consultant in accordance with the contract.			✓		

Project stages and steps	Lead actors				
	TAC committee	TAC council/ task force reporting to the Board	TAC Secretariat staff	Project steering committee	Consultant
14. In consultation with the project steering committee chair, TAC's project manager convenes meetings, and prepares agendas and minutes.			✓		
15. The consultant submits progress reports and draft deliverables to TAC's project manager, who forwards them to the project steering committee.			✓		✓
16. Project steering committee members review consultant submissions and provide comments to TAC's project manager.				✓	
17. TAC's project manager circulates material from the consultant to the project steering committee, compiles project steering committee comments, and circulates them to the project steering committee and the consultant.			✓		
18. Final project deliverables are reviewed and approved on behalf of the funding partners. <i>To proceed further, approval of the project steering committee is required.</i>				✓	
19. The consultant (and possibly a project steering committee representative) presents the project to the originating TAC committee for information. Committee members do not receive a copy of reports that will be sold by TAC.	✓			✓	✓
20. The consultant (and possibly a project steering committee representative) presents the project to the oversight TAC council/task force. By vote, the council/task force approves the final products with a recommendation to publish in TAC's name. Voting members of councils receive a copy of reports before approval. <i>To proceed further, Council/Task Force approval is required.</i>		✓		✓	✓
21. An electronic ballot of TAC's Chief Engineers Panel voting members is conducted to approve national technical guidelines for publication. <i>To proceed further, Chief Engineers approval is required (where applicable).</i>		✓			
Project in production					
22. The final product is edited, translated (when appropriate) and formatted as a TAC publication.			✓		
23. A technical review of the French translation is conducted by francophone volunteers from the project steering committee or colleagues from their organizations.				✓	
24. The TAC publication is priced, marketed and made available for sale or free download (as appropriate).			✓		

Rights and responsibilities of TAC

The TAC Secretariat has responsibility for many aspects of the management of pooled-fund projects and also has certain rights related to the resulting products. The Secretariat is responsible for:

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

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
- Develop and deliver training based on TAC products, and retain revenue from those activities

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.

Rights and responsibilities of funding partners

Funding partners have control over the scope and conduct of the pooled-fund project, 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.

Regardless of the magnitude of its financial commitment, each funding partner can expect transparency in TAC's project management, and to be treated as an equal member of the project steering committee. TAC will acknowledge funding partners in all project documentation, including publications that may result. Partners receive a complimentary copy of the final project deliverables and publication (in the language of their choice, where available), and are also offered a time-limited opportunity to purchase additional copies of the publication at a discount.

Each project funding partner has the right to appoint representatives to the project steering committee; in cases where one organization has multiple representatives, the organization will continue to have only one vote on

committee business. Through their appointed representatives on the project steering committee, funding partners have the right to oversee the conduct of the project and are collectively responsible for:

- Developing the project terms of reference and the request for proposals
- Reviewing project proposals and selecting a consultant
- Overseeing the project schedule and consultant assignment budget
- Deciding whether to invite the consultant and/or other guests to project steering committee meetings
- Receiving project status reports from TAC project management staff and the consultant
- Providing direction for the work in progress
- Receiving and commenting on draft documents developed by the project consultant
- Accepting or rejecting final project deliverables

Conflict of interest guidelines

Open and vibrant discussion is encouraged at all levels of the Association. In those discussions, especially where pooled-fund 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 TAC activities 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 may arise in the development and conduct of pooled-fund projects. The goal is to ensure that unfair advantage is not gained by one individual or organization¹ over another. The onus for declaring potential conflicts of interest rests with the affected individual in all instances. Where necessary to eliminate or mitigate an actual or perceived conflict of interest, an individual would be expected to withdraw from the work, discussions or decisions that give rise to the conflict.

These conflict of interest guidelines are offered as a code of practice for individuals participating in the activities and meetings of TAC, and should be reviewed periodically by volunteer councils and committees to ensure that all members (especially new members) understand them and have an opportunity to disclose potential conflicts of interest. Project steering committee members are expected to review these conflict of interest 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.

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.

Council, task force and committee volunteers

While discussion of potential projects should be open and inclusive to the greatest extent possible, volunteer members of TAC councils, task forces or committees may experience a conflict of interest when:

- Participating in the development, discussion or approval of pooled-fund project descriptions², if their participation would give them or their organization an unfair advantage over others, e.g.:
 - The member or the member's organization might reasonably be expected to submit, or be included in, a proposal for the work.
 - The member is currently being advised or supervised by a professor who might reasonably be expected to submit, or be included in, a proposal for the work.

In such cases, the member should disclose their circumstances to the executive members of the relevant council, task force or committee.

- Participating in the discussion or approval of the final deliverables of a pooled-fund project, if the member or the member's organization was a proponent (either successful or unsuccessful) on the project. In this case, the member should disclose their circumstances to the executive members of the relevant council, task force or committee, and recuse themselves from voting.

Project steering committee members

Project steering committee members must avoid situations that present irresolvable conflicts of interest, such as when:

- The member (or the member's organization, or a professor either advising or supervising the member) helps prepare, submits, or is included in a proposal for the work.
- The member (or the member's organization, or a professor either advising or supervising the member) would receive compensation for participating in the work resulting from a proposal, or has any other financial interest in a proposal.

In such cases, the member should disclose their circumstances and cease their participation on the project steering committee. Depending on the circumstances, the member's organization may also be asked to withdraw its project funding commitment.

Project steering committee members may experience a conflict of interest when:

- The member serves on the Board of Directors or similar body of a proponent, or provides technical advice to a proponent on matters unrelated to the pooled-fund project in question.
- The member is employed by the same organization as an individual listed as an independent consultant in a proposal.
- The member is in a position of influence or control relative to an individual named in a proposal (e.g. the member is the individual's thesis advisor or research sponsor).
- The member, the member's organization, or a direct relative of the member has an indirect commercial interest in the project outcome (e.g. the member or their direct relative works for a trade association or owns a patent for a product that could be helped or hurt by the results of the project).

² 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.

- A direct relative of the member (or their employer, or a professor either advising or supervising them) helps to prepare, submits, or is included in a proposal for the work.
- A direct relative of the member (or their employer, or a professor either advising or supervising them) would receive compensation for participating in the work resulting from a proposal, or has any other financial interest in a proposal.

In such cases, the member should disclose their circumstances to the project steering committee and TAC staff, but is not necessarily disqualified from serving on the project steering committee.

TAC Secretariat staff

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

- Help a proponent with proposal preparation, or provide other assistance that could jeopardize a fair competition (such as by reviewing parts of a proposal before submittal). TAC staff members may provide clarifications and general guidance to one or more individual proponents; however, in the interest of equity and transparency any information or guidance that could be interpreted as material assistance will be provided to all potential proponents at the same time via an addendum to the request for proposals.
- Serve in unpaid advisory roles with proponents, or accept compensation from proponents such as honoraria, consulting fees or payment for teaching.
- Manage a project when a special relationship exists between the staff member and the project contractor's organization(s) or employees thereof.

TAC contractors

To avoid conflicts of interest, potential TAC contractors are required to include in their proposals a section declaring any conflicts of interest, including information on possible sources of significant financial or organizational conflict of interest in conducting the project. 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 project, and proponents are asked to disclose any such circumstance and to explain how they will be accounted for. The project steering committee considers this information when evaluating proposals.

For more information, please contact TAC by email at secretariat@tac-atc.ca