

Ministry of Transportation

**Road Safety Research  
Partnership Program  
Guidelines 2023-2024**



**Ministry of Transportation**  
Safety Program Development Branch

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Please note that the program guidelines have been updated for the 2023/2024 competition. The requirements described in previous RSRPP Guidelines may have changed.

## 1.0 Introduction

### The Road Safety Research Partnership Program

Ontario's roads are among the safest in North America; however, despite transportation safety improvements in recent years, motor vehicle collisions continue to be a leading cause of death, injury, and disability among persons of all ages. Ontario's Ministry of Transportation (MTO), through the Research and Evaluation Office (REO), is committed to conducting and supporting research on road user behaviour and human factors surrounding transportation safety.

In the past, our research has contributed to policy and program developments such as the inclusion of cognitive screening tools in the Senior Driver's Licence Renewal Program and the expansion of Ontario's drinking-and-driving laws. A key component of REO's mission is to work with external partners to conduct research into aspects of transportation safety that cannot be addressed from within the ministry. As a result, the Road Safety Research Partnership Program (RSRPP) was established in 2016.

**The RSRPP provides grant funding to researchers in the broader Ontario public sector, enabling them to contribute policy-relevant research to support Ontario's efforts to improve transportation safety and keep the province among the safest jurisdictions in the world.**

### Call for Research Proposals

**The 2023 RSRPP call for proposals is now open.** Applicants are encouraged to review these guidelines for information about the program's requirements and eligibility criteria before applying. Applications must be electronically submitted using the 2023 RSRPP Application Form that accompanied these guidelines in the Call for Proposals communication from MTO.

If you have received this document indirectly and would like to apply for RSRPP funding, please contact [RSRPP@ontario.ca](mailto:RSRPP@ontario.ca) to request an application form and to be added to our program distribution list.

**Application Deadline: Friday, March 31, 2023**

Completed applications, as well as any questions regarding the program, can be sent to [RSRPP@ontario.ca](mailto:RSRPP@ontario.ca).

## 2.0 Purpose

The guidelines contained herein provide key information about RSRPP's scope and eligibility criteria, application process, proposal evaluation, reporting requirements, and general program terms and conditions. Researchers should use these guidelines to determine whether RSRPP is a viable option to support their road safety research goals.

## 3.0 Program Scope & Eligibility

### 3.1 Program Scope

Each year, RSRPP funds researchers across Ontario to study key road safety challenges and develop novel and actionable ways to make Ontario's roads safer. RSRPP projects take on average between one to three years to complete and typically do not exceed \$50,000 per year in program funding.

Selected partners must conduct applied road safety research using methodologies that the Ministry of Transportation cannot perform internally. This includes research that leverages any form of specialized equipment or resources such as private data sources, survey studies, simulator testing, or clinical expertise, as examples. Only studies that cannot be performed by MTO personnel are eligible for program funding.

### 3.2 Eligible Applicants

Funding through RSRPP is open and competitive for the following types of Ontario institutions: hospital research institutes, colleges of applied arts and technology, publicly assisted universities (including their affiliated colleges, research centres, institutes, and hospitals), and non-profit organizations located within Ontario.

The proposed study's Principal Investigator (PI) must be a full- or part-time faculty member or employee of an eligible institution. An institution that is listed on MTO's Vendor of Record for procurement services is not eligible for funding through RSRPP. The successful applicant is prohibited from subcontracting project work to outside vendors.

### 3.3 Eligible Research Topics

RSRPP research topics must have practical applications for improving road safety in Ontario. Proposed topics should address a current issue or opportunity for the provincial transportation system or its governing policies and programs. The following research questions are examples of road safety topics identified by MTO as areas of interest with a research need.

- How effective are novel digital assessment tools at determining fitness-to-drive?
- What is the risk, prevalence, and profile of impaired micromobility users?
- How prevalent is distracted driving among delivery service drivers who use active transportation and mobile phones to carry out their duties? How do job demands

interact with or influence dangerous mobile phone use behaviour while on the road?

- How are emerging transportation technologies such as micromobility devices impacting Ontarians with disabilities?
- What are the opinions and perceptions among Ontario police officers regarding traffic law enforcement, penalties, and provincial court processes?
- Does the use of advance driver assistance systems (ADAS) negatively impact driving skills or driver behaviour over time?
- What are the most effective 'safe system' designs for cyclist crossings at high-speed ramps and interchanges with minimal disruption to vehicular traffic?
- What are the in-transit safety risks for passengers on public buses? How do factors like crowding, seating, passenger position, and interior design elements affect injury risk?

Applicants may submit research proposals on topics that are not represented in the list above. Proposals must include clear descriptions of the research need and applications of the results.

## 4.0 Application and Evaluation Process

### 4.1 Application Process

**Step 1.** Review these guidelines in their entirety to confirm that your research proposal and organization are eligible for funding under RSRPP.

**Step 2.** Complete the 2023 RSRPP Application Form that was enclosed with the Call for Proposals email from MTO. Note: if you require a copy of the application form, please send your request to [RSRPP@ontario.ca](mailto:RSRPP@ontario.ca).

**Step 3.** Submit your completed application form to [RSRPP@ontario.ca](mailto:RSRPP@ontario.ca) with any supplementary documents (e.g., curricula vitae) by March 31, 2023. You will receive an email confirming your submission within two to three business days.

**Step 4.** Respond to any MTO follow-up communications regarding your RSRPP submission. Program admin may seek clarification or further information about your research proposal during the evaluation process.

Note: Information contained in the application package will be treated as confidential and is subject to MTO's obligations under the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*.

### 4.2 Evaluation Criteria

RSRPP applications will be reviewed and scored by subject matter experts and each application's scores will be averaged for ranking. Applications will be evaluated on how well the proposed research project satisfies the following criteria:

1. Relevance and Applicability
  - The proposal addresses current road safety issues or opportunities in Ontario.
    - Note: suggested research topics can be found in Section 3.3.
  - The applicant demonstrates an understanding of the relevant body of research and clearly states the unique value of their proposed approach.
  - The research findings will have potential to improve current road safety policies, programs, guidelines, or system operations.
2. Methodology and Innovation
  - The study design and methodology are appropriate, innovative, and rigorous.
  - The methodology requires specialized equipment, expertise, or resources.
  - The study uses novel methods and analysis to meet its research objectives.
3. Budget and Value-for-Money
  - The project budget and timeline are realistic and justifiable.
  - The projected costs make optimal use of the study resources and personnel.
  - RSRPP funding leverages substantial in-kind contributions or alternative funding sources for the proposed study.
4. Expertise and Communication
  - The PI's curriculum vitae demonstrates proper credentials and strong subject matter expertise related to the research topic.
  - The research team's qualifications and experience demonstrate expertise in road user safety or related fields.
  - The applicant demonstrates a strong willingness and intention to disseminate their research results and support practical applications of its findings.
  - The applicant's knowledge translation plan is thoughtful, detailed, and considers all relevant stakeholders and beneficiaries as audiences.

### **4.3 Notification of Award & Onboarding**

Applicants will receive a decision letter regarding their application once the evaluation process is complete. Successful applicants will be required to enter into a Transfer Payment Agreement (TPA) with MTO. The TPA will set out the terms and conditions upon which the applicant will receive the funds, as well as the funding amount and the relevant details related to deliverable timelines.

Applicants are required to collect the necessary TPA signature(s) from within their organization and return the signed and scanned copy by email to [RSRPP@ontario.ca](mailto:RSRPP@ontario.ca). The project term will commence once the TPA has been fully signed by both parties.

## 5.0 Reporting Requirements

RSRPP reporting requirements will be specified in the TPA for each awarded project. In general, funding recipients will be required to submit regular reports detailing their research progress, risks and issues, and financial expenditures.

Successful applicants will be required to submit three forms of report throughout the course of the project: an initial report, interim report(s), and final report.

### 5.1 Initial Report

The initial report will be prepared and presented by the project team at the outset of the research study. This report will summarize the project plan including a timeline of deliverables, milestones, and forecasted expenditures. All sources of funding for the study and their amounts should be disclosed, where confidentiality conditions permit, including in-kind funding from the recipient organization. Project risks should be identified along with mitigation strategies to prevent delays or changes to expected deliverable dates.

### 5.2 Interim Report(s)

One or more interim reports will be required throughout the course of the project term depending on the duration of the study and the schedule of deliverables specified in the TPA. Interim reports typically contain the following information:

- Any changes to the project personnel or contact information.
- Project activities that have been completed since the previous report.
- An accounting of all eligible project expenditures that have been incurred and paid as of the submission date of the report.
- Project issues, expected impacts, and the actions being taken to address the issue(s).
- Next steps in the project plan.

### 5.3 Final Report

The final report will summarize the methods and outcomes of the study in a standard research report format, including:

- Table of contents (with a list of figures, tables, and appendices)
- Executive summary
- Background/Introduction
- Methods
- Results
- Discussion
- Conclusion

The report's discussion should include potential applications of the research findings, detailing how the results can be used to improve Ontario's road safety policies, programs, or operations. Plans for publication and/or knowledge translation to transportation safety stakeholders should be detailed in the report.

## 6.0 Payment Process & Requirements

### 6.1 Payment Schedule

Applicants will provide a full cost breakdown for their research proposal in the RSRPP Application Form. The forecasted budget must include a full account of purchases and activities to be funded by the award. Other sources of funding for the project should be indicated as well, including in-kind contributions from the receiving organization. MTO reserves the right to disallow expenditures in the budget that are not sufficiently justified. Partial support of a project may be recommended by the RSRPP committee.

Successful applications will be used to develop a payment and deliverable schedule for inclusion in a TPA. Awarded applicants will have the opportunity to review and negotiate the timing of payments and deliverables based on their proposed project plan. Note that payments must be made at or close to the time the funds are needed by the recipient (just-in-time funding) to pay for eligible expenditures. Any modification to the signed TPA budget or payment schedule requires prior written approval by MTO.

### 6.2 Payment Process

The study's PI, or a delegate with signing authority, will submit a report to MTO by each deliverable date specified in the TPA. Once the deliverable(s) and expenditure(s) described in the report have been reviewed and accepted by MTO, funding will be remitted to the recipient organization in accordance with the Payment Plan Schedule of the TPA. Note that it may take up to 30 days from the report approval date for the payment to be processed.

The forecasted budget for each fiscal year of the project must be fully invoiced to MTO by the second-last week of the fiscal year (mid-March) to ensure the allotted payments can be processed before fiscal year-end. Unclaimed expenditures for a given fiscal year cannot be rolled over the March 31 cut-off date without prior approval from MTO and may no longer be eligible for funding.

### 6.3 Eligible Expenditures

Eligible expenditures must be relevant to the study and necessary for project completion. The following descriptions of expenditures are intended to serve as a general guide only. If you are unsure whether an expense is eligible, please contact a program representative at [RSRPP@ontario.ca](mailto:RSRPP@ontario.ca).

- Planning and start-up costs:
  - Costs related to the development and approvals necessary for project work to begin, such as research ethics board approvals and certificates of insurance.
- Equipment and material costs:
  - Hardware and software equipment, including essential operating and maintenance costs, and materials/consumables necessary for project work.
- Salaries and wages
  - Research and/or support staff hired to support project work, including graduate and undergraduate students, post-doctoral fellows, research associates, and

technical, clerical, and secretarial staff.

- Overhead and general resources
  - Overhead costs can be claimed up to 15% of the total project budget. Other resources include supplies and services (postage, printing, etc.), consulting, essential travel and accommodations, and contingency costs.

## 6.4 Ineligible Expenditures

All non-project-specific costs are considered ineligible for RSRPP funding. Listing ineligible expenditures for reimbursement in your application may result in the application being denied. Please review the examples provided below carefully. If you are unsure whether an expense is eligible, please contact a program representative at [RSRPP@ontario.ca](mailto:RSRPP@ontario.ca).

- Expenses related to the recipient organization's ongoing operational activities
  - E.g., rent, utilities, insurance, general use computers, etc.
- The Principal Investigator's salary
- Capital asset costs such as permanent structures or acquisitions that are not for the specific purpose of carrying out the project plan
- Food and beverages
- Costs for common office items such as stationery, furniture, and décor
- Amortization and/or depreciation expenses
- Refundable Harmonized Sales Tax (HST) or other refundable expenses such as security deposits
- Legal, audit, or interest fees

## 7.0 General Notice

### 7.1 Audit & Record Retention

MTO reserves the right to audit any project funded by the RSRPP. The recipient organization is required to keep any records that may be required for a financial audit for the duration of the current fiscal year plus an additional seven years. These rights are in addition to any rights provided to the Auditor General pursuant to section 9(1) of the *Auditor General Act (Ontario)*.

### 7.2 Termination by MTO

MTO reserves the right to terminate an award at any time if, in the opinion of MTO, the award recipient:

- fails to comply with any of the requirements set out in these Guidelines and in the TPA,
- requests reimbursement for a purpose not authorized by or without the prior written consent of MTO, or

- fails to aptly provide the requested deliverable(s), report(s), or proof of financial expenditure(s).

MTO reserves the right to terminate an award at any time by providing written notice of termination for the reasons stated above or if, for any reason, MTO does not receive the necessary funds from the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. If MTO terminates its allocated funding before project completion due to unforeseen circumstances, it may offset the recipient's incurred costs against the ministry's RSRPP funds where applicable.

### **7.3 Conflict of Interest**

An award recipient receiving RSRPP funds must ensure the research project is carried out and the provided funds are used without an actual, potential, or perceived conflict of interest. A conflict of interest includes any circumstances where the recipient or any relevant person with project influence has outside commitments, relationships, or financial interests that may interfere with the recipient's objective judgment relating to the project and the use of the grant funds.