

Ministry of Transportation

**Road Safety Research
Partnership Program
Guidelines 2025-26**



Ministry of Transportation
Safety Program Development Branch

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Please note that the program guidelines have been updated for the 2024-25 competition. The requirements described in previous RSRPP Guidelines may have changed.

1.0 Introduction

The Road Safety Research Partnership Program

The Road Safety Research Partnership Program (RSRPP) provides grant funding to researchers in broader public sector and non-profit organizations, 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.

Ontario has made significant strides in improving road safety in recent years; however, motor vehicle collisions remain a leading cause of death, injury, and disability for people of all ages. To address these challenges, the Ministry of Transportation of Ontario's (MTO) Road Safety Research Partnership Program is dedicated to advancing research on road user behaviour and safety risk factors in partnership with Ontario's extensive research community.

RSRPP projects have played a crucial role in shaping key transportation safety policies and programs, such as the integration of cognitive screening tools in the Senior Driver's Licence Renewal Program and the expansion of Ontario's drinking-and-driving laws. The central goal of the program is to collaborate with external partners to explore areas of road safety that require resources and expertise beyond the ministry's capacity.

We invite research institutions and government partners to engage in this important program, aimed at enhancing our understanding of road safety and informing future policy decisions.

Call for Research Proposals

The 2025 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 2025 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 to request an application form and to be added to our program's distribution list.

Application Deadline: Friday February 7th, 2025

Completed applications, as well as any questions regarding the program, can be submitted to RSRPP@ontario.ca.

2.0 Purpose

The guidelines contained herein provide key information about RSRPP's scope, eligibility requirements, application process, evaluation criteria, project reporting, 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, the RSRPP funds researchers across Ontario to study key road safety challenges and develop novel and actionable ways to make Ontario's roads safer. Proposed projects should not exceed \$50,000 per year in RSRPP funding, including overhead costs, and should take a maximum of three years to complete.

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 proprietary 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.

Projects must target outcomes that are applicable to provincial road safety policies, programs, or operations to ensure that study results can be quickly and effectively implemented into the transportation system. The RSRPP does not provide funding for basic research or projects intended to generate future revenue such as intellectual property development and commercialization.

3.2 Eligible Applicants

RSRPP funding is open and competitive for the following types of organizations in Ontario: 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.

The proposed study's Principal Investigator (PI) must be a full- or part-time employee or faculty member of an eligible organization. Professionals that do not work for the eligible institution may still be listed as a Co-PI if their credentials support the study's methodology.

3.3 Eligible Research Topics

Proposed topics must address a current road safety issue or opportunity affecting Ontario's transportation system. The following research questions and topics are examples identified by MTO as areas of interest with an immediate research need:

- ✚ How can the province safeguard against risks facing road users, maintenance systems, and design standards resulting from the growing number of heavy, electric vehicles? (E.g., pedestrian injury risk, guardrail design, battery corrosion from winter salt, etc.)
- ✚ What functions and features of personal mobility devices are necessary to accommodate the mobility needs of people with disabilities and how do these needs vary by disability group?
- ✚ How does driver attention and response time change as drivers become more experienced with autonomous driving features (SAE Level 2 and above) and how are these measures affected by varying road conditions?
- ✚ Safety assessment of standing passengers on intercommunity public transit and motorcoach buses, including injury types, contributing factors, and evidence-based approaches to address these risks (e.g., proper standing capacity limits, safety equipment, road speed thresholds, design interventions, etc.).

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

Note: RSRPP does not fund projects related to infrastructure engineering. For infrastructure research funding opportunities, please reach out to MTO's Highway Infrastructure Innovation Funding Program at HIIFP@ontario.ca.

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 2025 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.

Step 3. Submit your completed application form to RSRPP@ontario.ca with any supplementary documents (e.g., curricula vitae for the PIs) by February 7, 2025. You will receive an email confirming your submission within two 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.

Step 5. All program applicants will receive a decision letter once the applicant(s) selected for funding confirm their intent to proceed with a research partnership agreement. Each year, between one and three applicants are selected for funding.

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

Application pre-screening selects for projects that can improve transportation programs, policies, and operations administered by MTO or its agencies. Road safety improvements that must be implemented at the federal or municipal level (e.g., motor vehicle safety standards or local infrastructure planning) are not eligible for funding.

RSRPP applications are reviewed and scored by subject matter experts in the relevant research field. Each application's scores will be averaged and ranked for a selection committee's review. Applications are 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 and selection 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 MTO. 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, progress report(s), and a final report.

5.1 Initial Report

The initial report occurs within the first two months of the project term and includes:

- A certificate of insurance.
- An invoice and itemized list for eligible expenditures incurred.
- A presentation of the project plan that includes:
 - A summary of the project team
 - Project objectives and methodology
 - Timeline of key milestones
 - Details of how the results can be applied to the current transportation system.

5.2 Progress Report(s)

One or more progress 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 require the recipient to fill out a report template with the following information:

- Changes to the project personnel or contact information, if applicable.
- Project activities that have been completed since the previous report.
- An accounting of all eligible project expenditures that have been incurred.
- Project issues, an assessment of their impact on deliverables or timeline, and the actions being taken to address them.
- Next steps in the project plan.

5.3 Final Report

The final report will summarize the project in a research report format that includes:

- Table of contents (with a list of figures, tables, and appendices)
- Executive summary
- Background/Introduction
- Methodology
- Results/Findings
- Discussion and Conclusion
 - Must include a detailed explanation of how the results can be applied to Ontario's road safety policies, programs, standards, and/or operations.
- Communication plan (E.g., publication, conference presentations, other means of knowledge translation to road safety stakeholders).

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 and invoice 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.

- 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.

- 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.

8.0 Appendix: Previously Funded RSRPP Projects

| Year | Project Title |
|------|---|
| 2024 | Driver Training for Appropriate Use of Advanced Driver Assistance Systems |
| 2023 | Attitudes and Perceptions of Traffic Safety Enforcement Among Police Officers in Ontario |
| | The Tech-wise Driver: Exploring the Sustained Efficacy and Technology Acceptance of Targeted ADAS for Older Drivers |
| 2021 | Simulator Testing to Examine the Driving Safety of Drivers with Monocular Vision |
| | Deterring Mobile Phone Use While Driving: Systematic Intervention Design |
| | Evaluating the Acceptability and Feasibility of an Evidence-based and User-informed Approach to Refreshing Older Adults' Driving Skills |
| 2020 | The association of driving impairment after consumption of cannabis edibles with blood THC and detection of THC in saliva |
| | Impact of COVID-19 on Road Safety: A Population-based Survey of Ontario Drivers |
| 2019 | ROADS Project: Road Observational Assessment of Driving Distractions |
| | Mitigating Distracted Driving based on Understanding of Drivers' Personality, Motivational, and Mobile Phone Dependency Characteristics |
| | Real-world Assessment of Advanced Driver Assistance System |
| | A comprehensive framework for understanding vulnerable road user behaviour and enhancing their safety in Ontario |
| | Road Safety Impact of Cannabis Retail Stores |