

MDOT FINAL RESEARCH REPORT GUIDELINES—APRIL 2016

For most MDOT research projects, the final report is the crucial deliverable provided to MDOT in exchange for payment of federal and state funds for the research. A very few projects have only test results, software, manuals, or educational materials as the deliverable, but these are rare. ***Unless this is noted in the proposal and at the project's inception, the principal investigator(s) (PIs) MUST produce a final research report for any federally and/or state funded report.*** A draft report must be submitted to all technical advisory committee (TAC) members at least 3 months before the end of the contract to allow for review and revision. This document will serve as a guideline for PIs to follow in preparing the draft and finalizing the report.

Also available for download on MDOT Research Division's website is a Microsoft Word® template. Use of the template is NOT required; however, it is tool for those who wish to use it. Within the template, titles, styles, and wording are flexible. The template contains all required elements of a report, plus a Table of Contents that is updateable at any point during the report writing process.

Report Elements and Organization

A final report will include most of the typical elements listed in the diagram on the next page. Some, such as the Technical Documentation page, Table of Contents, and Executive Summary, are required. Some are optional (such as appendices), depending on what tasks were done in your particular project. Detailed information about how to complete each element follows the diagram on the next pages. On page 3 is a chart showing the typical workflow and timeline for submitting a draft and final report.

Parts of a Research Report

Front

- Cover/Title Page
- Technical Documentation Page
- Disclaimer Notice
- MDOT Statement of Nondiscrimination
- Author Acknowledgments
- Table of Contents
- List of Tables/Figures
- List of Abbreviations/Acronyms

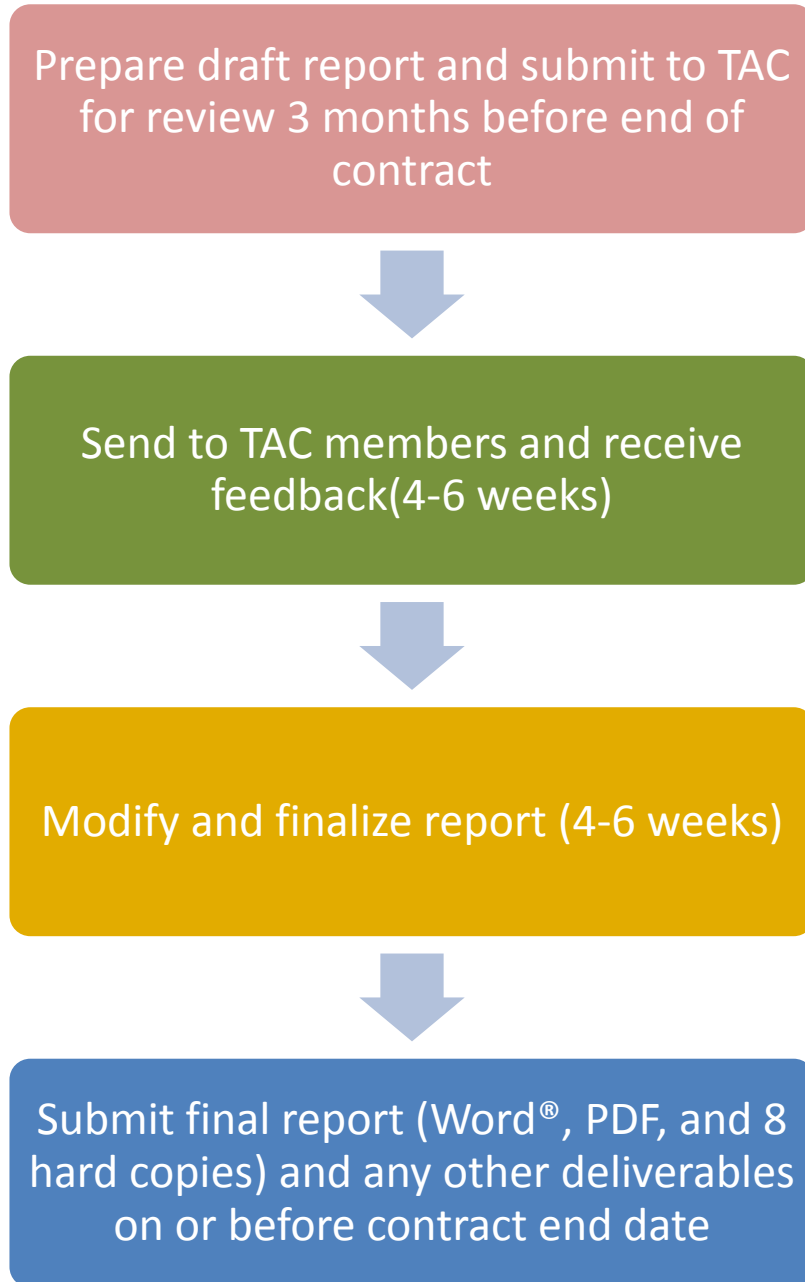
Body

- Executive Summary
- Introduction/Background
- Literature Search
- Methodology/Research Approach
- Research Findings and Applications
- Conclusions
- Recommendations/Implementation Plan

End

- References
- Appendices
- Footnotes
- Back Page

Typical MDOT Research Draft/Final Report Workflow



Front of the Report

The items in this section that show as “Required” must all be in the report as they appear in this document. The only possible exceptions might be the list of tables, figure, and abbreviations, if these do not apply to your report. These are listed as “Optional” in the list below:

- *Cover/Title page (Required)*—This will be of thicker paper than the main report. This will show the report title, author(s), name of consultant (university or company), State Study number, and date of the report. Consultant, university and/or MDOT logos may be put on this page.
- *FHWA Technical Documentation Page (Required--see page 10 of this document for an example)*—This is an FHWA/USDOT requirement and **must** be completed and submitted in the front of the report. Please feel free to copy and paste the example into your report and complete the required information. **Please delete the instructional verbiage after you fill in the spaces on this page.**
- *Disclaimer notice (Required--example on p. 11—please feel free to copy and paste this into your report).*
- *MDOT Statement of Nondiscrimination (Required--example on p. 12--please feel free to copy and paste this into your report)*
- *Author Acknowledgments—Optional--*These are not required, but you might wish to acknowledge those who assisted with the project, such as mentors and students not listed on the front page as authors, for example.
- *Table of Contents—Required--*Most word processing software can aid in building an automated TOC. For this to work, you will need to make sure the styles of each heading are denoted as Heading 1, Heading 2, Chapter Title, etc. Please consult the software help or a reference book for more information.
- *List of Tables/Figures (Optional, if applicable)*—Most word processing software can aid in building an automated list of tables/figures. For this to work, you will

need to make sure the styles of each caption are denoted as Caption style.

Please consult the software help or a reference book for more information. You can do a List of Tables and a List of Figures separately if you wish.

- *List of Abbreviations/Acronyms (Optional, if applicable)*—Explain any acronyms, symbols, or abbreviations commonly used in the report.

Body of the Report

This section is a bit more flexible than the Front of the Report. The titles of these sections can be worded differently (for example, you can write *Research Results and Interpretation* instead of *Research Findings and Applications*). The concepts and relevant information must appear somewhere in the report in an organized fashion, even if styled or titled differently. The following serves as an example of how a report might be organized. The required elements are noted.

- *Executive Summary—Required*--This consists of one or two paragraphs that clearly and concisely summarize the research problem, objective, methods, research findings, conclusions, and recommendations (similar to an abstract).
- *Introduction/Background—Required but can be titled differently*—Discuss the research problem, study objectives, and any other background information.
- *Literature Search— Required in most studies*--Discuss any previous publications relevant to your subject.
- *Methodology/Research Approach---* *Required but can be titled differently*--This part will include any testing, analysis, surveys, or any other means used by the PI to address the research objective. Also include any changes in method that may have occurred during the course of the research.
- *Research Findings and Applications—Required but can be titled differently*--Discussion and interpretation of results and how they relate to the original research problem.

- *Conclusions--Required--*Summarize the results and explain how they solved the problem (or if not, why not), wholly or in part. Also discuss the benefits (lives/money saved, new specification, cost/benefit ratio, etc.) in depth.
- *Implementation Plan/Recommendations—Required but can be titled differently--* Include any recommendations and plans for MDOT to implement the findings. Also reference any separate implementation deliverables, such as training modules, draft specifications, or presentations.

End of the Report

- *Bibliography/References--Required—*List all citations. Authors are responsible for obtaining permission for use of any copyrighted materials. Please consult a style manual or use APA guidelines for citations.
- *Footnotes* (if applicable)—These can also be incorporated into the body of the report at the end of the relevant chapters.
- *Appendices* (if applicable)—Include in-depth test results or any information you feel belongs in the report but not in the main body.
- *Back page—Required—*This will generally be blank and will be of the same thickness of the title page.

Style Considerations

- Use a font size of at least 12-point that is easy to read and compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). ADA-compliant fonts include Trebuchet, Calibri, Arial, Verdana, Tahoma, Helvetica, Futura, and San Serif.
- Do not right-justify the text or use all capital letters within text. All-caps may be used in headings or titles, but not in body text.

- Please label figures and tables with a centered, numbered, bolded caption (either directly underneath or above the table/figure).
- Put the *entire* final report in one file each (one Microsoft Word® file and one PDF file). **Do not** send chapters, appendices, spreadsheets, pictures, or other report portions in separate files.
- ***Please proofread the draft report carefully for typographical, spelling, and grammar errors, and correct these before draft and final submissions.*** The report will ultimately be published with your name listed as the author. It will be placed on MDOT's website and distributed to the Mississippi State Library Commission, the National Transportation Library, the Transportation Research Board (TRB), and other research entities nationally and worldwide, so please keep this in mind when submitting the draft and final versions of the report. If more than one person wrote chapters in the report, please check the flow of the overall document before submission. Number the pages either at the top or bottom.
- APA (American Psychological Association) guidelines are an accepted standard for scientific and technical writing. MDOT does not strictly require this style; however, it is a great source for answering writing and stylistic questions. Please see <http://www.apastyle.org/> for more information.

General Guidelines

Remember the three concepts for technical writing: subject, audience, and purpose. Many reports will be technical in nature, and use of specialized terms is necessary. However, you may wish to add some brief explanation of some concepts depending on the audience. The conclusions and implementation portion in particular need to be clearly understood as they will likely be read by people beyond the technical area of the report. Also, the Executive Summary/Abstract needs to be concise and understandable for audiences such as CEOs and

other upper management. Communicate often with the TAC members and the Research Division during the draft report review phase.

Final Report Submission/Delivery Requirements

After TAC approval of the draft report and any modifications, the PI will submit the following final report items to his/her Research Division TAC member:

- Eight (8) spiral-, comb- or perfect-bound hard copies of the final report (no stapled or notebook-bound copies will be accepted).
- Please copy/print on both sides of the paper in the 8 copies to reduce use of paper.
- Provide a Microsoft Word® electronic file of the final report, with the **entire** final report's components (title page, abstract, chapters, appendices, documentation page, etc.) combined into **one** file.
- Provide a PDF version of the final report, also with all components combined into one file.

Email the Word® and PDF electronic documents to all TAC members. The hard copies should be mailed/shipped/delivered to the Research Division TAC member at the address below:

(Name of Research Division TAC Member)
Mississippi Dept of Transportation
Research Division 86-01
PO Box 1850
Jackson, MS 39215-1850

If the electronic files are too large to e-mail, the PI(s) may submit a CD/DVD or flash drive instead. FTP sites, large file transfer software, or cloud-based storage and transfer (One Drive® or Drop Box® among others) may also be used. (This does not constitute an endorsement of the above-mentioned file transfer software packages). When using this method of delivery, the PI will need to communicate closely with the Research TAC person to (1) let him/her know that

the files are accessible this way, and (2) to ensure MDOT staff can receive or download the files or can access the FTP site or cloud storage location.

Hand-delivery of hard copies (and/or CD/DVD/flash drive if applicable) is also acceptable. Our office is located on the 7th floor of the MDOT Administration Building at 401 North West Street, Jackson, Mississippi 39201. Please put the Research TAC member's name and "Research Division 86-01" on the box if you are leaving them at the security desk in the building lobby to aid the guard in getting these to the correct person. MDOT assumes no responsibility for undelivered reports. The best way to ensure that Research has received your reports is to communicate, let us know the report is being delivered, and follow up if you are unsure. ***It is the responsibility of the PI to communicate with Research Division about the method of file delivery/transfer.***

After Research Division receiving the final report, it will be posted on MDOT's website at <http://mdot.ms.gov/portal/research.aspx>. It may be a few weeks before the report shows up on MDOT's website.

Further Information/Questions

Please contact your Research Division TAC member if you need further assistance.

Below is a list of all Division engineers who serve as Research Division TAC members:

William (Bill) Barstis	wbarstis@mdot.ms.gov	Engineer
Marta Charria	mcharria@mdot.ms.gov	Engineer
Alex Collum	acollum@mdot.ms.gov	Engineer
Alex Middleton	amiddleton@mdot.ms.gov	Engineer
Cynthia (Cindy) Smith	cjsmith@mdot.ms.gov	Asst. State Research Engineer
James Watkins	jwatkins@mdot.ms.gov	State Research Engineer

We are here to help, so please call 601-359-7650 or email us.

Technical Report Documentation Page

1. Report No. FHWA/MDOT-RD-yy-xxx (yy is the year of publication; xxx is your state study report #)	2. Government Accession No. leave blank	3. Recipient's Catalog No. leave blank	
4. Title and Subtitle Report title		5. Report Date Date of report publication (usually ending contract date)	
		6. Performing Organization Code leave blank	
7. Author(s) Authors and their ORC IDs (Please visit www.orcid.org to get one if you do not have one).		8. Performing Organization Report No. Your organization's report # if different from MDOT	
9. Performing Organization Name and Address Your organization name/address		10. Work Unit No. (TRAIS) Leave blank	
		11. Contract or Grant No. Your contract #	
12. Sponsoring Agency Name and Address Mississippi Dept of Transportation PO Box 1850 Jackson, MS 39215-1850		13. Type Report and Period Covered Final—(insert start and end dates)	
		14. Sponsoring Agency Code Leave Blank	
15. Supplementary Notes Optional			
16. Abstract Put a short abstract of the report here. You might draw from your executive summary.			
17. Key Words Use subject words such as materials, maintenance, pavement, transit, etc. (Look at Transportation Research Thesaurus, TRT, on http://trt.trb.org/trt.asp ? for guidance)		18. Distribution Statement Unclassified	
19. Security Classif. (of this report) Unclassified	20. Security Classif. (of this page) Unclassified	21. No. of Pages	22. Price leave blank

DISCLAIMER

Your organization name here _____ and the Mississippi Department of Transportation do not endorse service providers, products, or manufacturers. Trade names or manufacturers' names appear herein solely because they are considered essential to the purpose of this report.

The contents of this report do not necessarily reflect the views and policies of the sponsor agency.

MDOT NOTICE OF NONDISCRIMINATION

The Mississippi Department of Transportation (MDOT) operates its programs and services without regard to race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability in accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended and related statutes and implementing authorities.