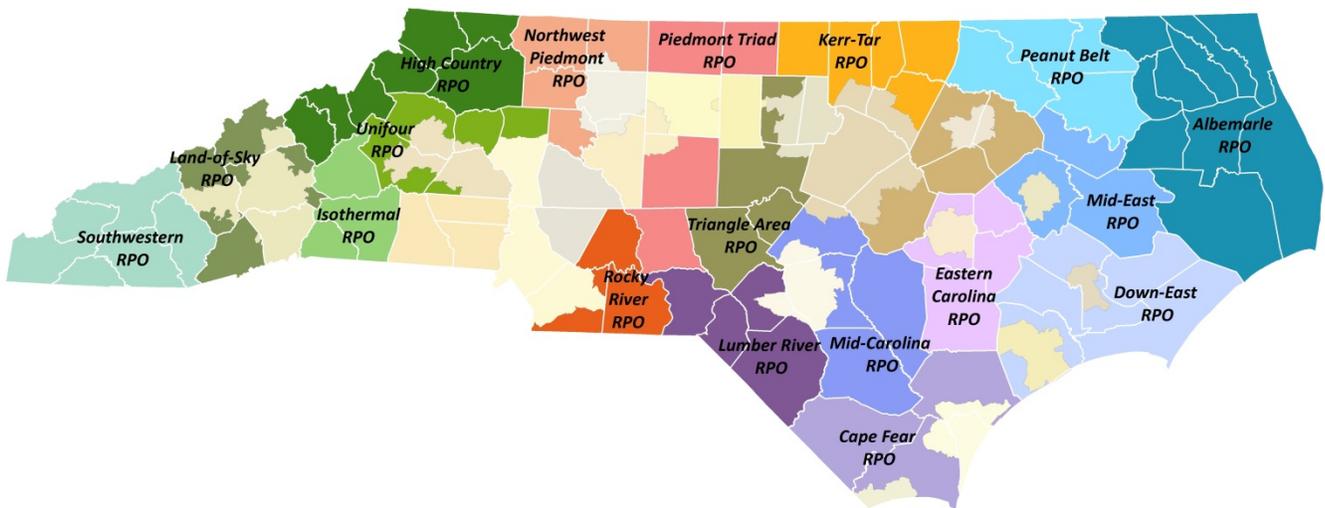


RPO Manual

2015



RPO Administrative Procedures Manual

**Updated Edition
2015**

**Produced by the NCDOT Transportation Planning Branch
In conjunction with the
North Carolina Association of Rural Planning Organizations**

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Background

The Manual

The purpose of this document is to provide each LPA with the tools necessary to effectively manage a Rural Planning Organizations (RPO) program. The manual also provides North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) staff with the information and timelines for the effective oversight of individual RPOs. The manual is organized by work tasks with detailed timelines, guidance, document templates and examples where necessary. Templates are provided to be the basis for document submittals. Examples are provided to demonstrate the potential scope of a specific document. Revisions to the standard documents, when required, should consider the templates and examples provided in the manual. Dates given in this document should be interpreted as the nearest business day before the date if it happens to fall on a holiday or weekend.

Authority

In 2000, the State of North Carolina recognized the need for more coordinated transportation planning in rural North Carolina areas not within an MPO. Rural Planning Organizations (RPOs) were developed in response to [Senate Bill 1195 by enacting amended General Statute 136, Article 17](#) which directed NCDOT to develop a plan to establish RPOs. NCDOT completed its report in early 2001 and 20 RPOs were established between 2001 and 2003. As defined in 136-66.210, an RPO is “a voluntary organization of local officials formed through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to work cooperatively with the Department to plan rural transportation systems and to advise the Department on rural transportation policy”.

The boundaries of a RPO may coincide with, but not overlap the boundaries of a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) or another RPO.

GS 136-212 identifies four primary duties for RPOs:

- Developing, in cooperation with the Department (NCDOT), long-range, local and regional multimodal transportation plans;
- Providing a forum for public participation in the transportation planning process;
- Developing and prioritizing suggestions for transportation projects the organization believes should be included in the State’s Transportation Improvement Program (STIP); and
- Providing transportation-related information to local governments and other interested organizations and persons.

RPO Organization

According to GS 136-211 (b), an RPO must consist of at least three contiguous counties with a population of at least 50,000 people. An RPO consists of an administrative entity which provides the professional staff to the RPO, a Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC) consisting of local staff from member governments and agencies and a Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) made up of elected and appointed officials.

Lead Planning Agency (LPA)

The LPA serves as the administrative entity for the RPO. Eligible administrative entities include a regional council of governments, regional economic development agencies, chambers of

commerce and local governments. The LPA receives and expends funds on behalf of the RPO. The LPA provides at least one (1) full time equivalent professional staff member to carry out the duties of the RPO within the context of an adopted plan of work. The LPA is defined within the adopted MOU, and may be changed based on the agreement of the RPO member governments and NCDOT.

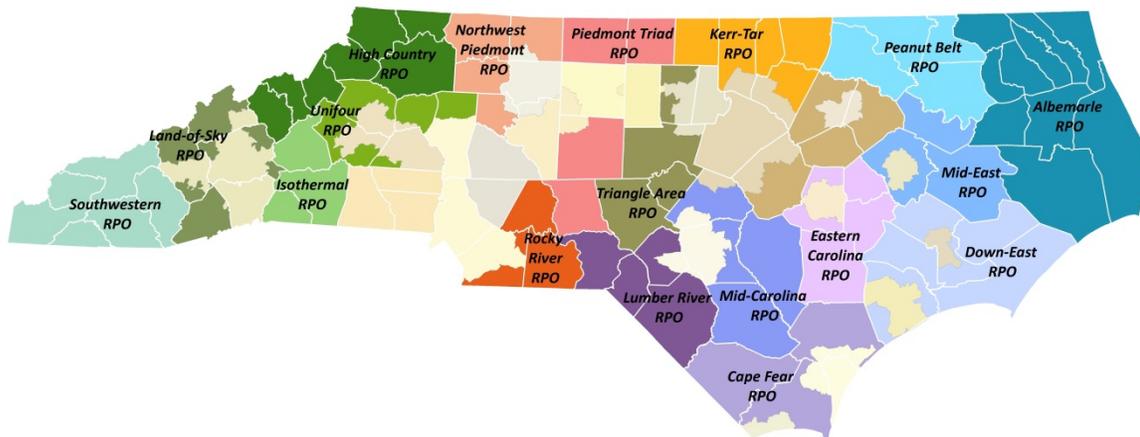
Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC)

The TCC consists of staff members from local government members, agencies and NCDOT. The TCC provides guidance and recommendations to the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC). The TCC membership is defined within the adopted MOU.

Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC)

The TAC consists of local elected officials and a North Carolina Board of Transportation member. The TAC establishes the goals, priorities and objectives of the RPO, reviews and recommends changes to comprehensive transportation plans within its boundaries, reviews and approves an annual plan of work, and reviews and prioritizes transportation improvement projects for submission to NCDOT. The TAC membership is defined within the adopted MOU. As of 2013, TAC members are subject to the states ethics law. Please review ethic requirements on <http://www.ethicscommission.nc.gov/>

Figure 1: The Rural Planning Organizations of North Carolina



Funding

The RPO program is currently funded on a reimbursement basis using Federal State Planning and Research Funds (SPR), with a 20% local match required. Allocations vary based on population and number of counties in the RPO.

Standard Documents

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

The [MOU](#) establishes the membership, bylaws and voting structure of the RPO. It also identifies the overall responsibilities of the RPO. All member counties must sign the MOU. Municipalities within the RPO may sign the MOU or adopt a resolution in support of the RPO. Any municipal resolutions must be submitted along with the MOU.

Funding Agreement

Each RPO is required to adopt an agreement that establishes rules for disbursement and accounting of RPO grant funds. The Agreement for Disbursement and Accounting of Rural Transportation Planning Funds is the continuing agreement between the LPA and NCDOT. NCDOT may provide reimbursement to the designated LPA only. The LPA may enact sub-agreement(s) pertaining to the local match. A [Funding Award Letter](#) is provided to the LPA at the beginning of each calendar year detailing the available RPO funding for the coming fiscal year. The fiscal year runs from July 1 – June 30.

Bylaws

[Bylaws](#) govern the membership, voting structure, and meeting procedures of the TCC and TAC. Bylaws for the RPO may be adopted and revised by the TAC from time to time.

Prospectus

The [Prospectus](#) is a formal reference guide that provides a detailed description of the full range of potential work elements that are eligible for inclusion in a planning work program.

Public Involvement Plan or Policy (PIP)

The [PIP](#) is a formally adopted statement policy or plan regarding public involvement activities related to the work of the RPO. The PIP provides guidance to staff to ensure adequate public review techniques and opportunities are provided, based on specific activities, documents or processes.

Planning Work Program (PWP)

The [PWP](#) is a standard document that consists of a funding table. The PWP is prepared on an annual basis to identify the planning priorities for the coming year and to define the planning work products and activities to be carried out by the RPO staff. Estimated expenditures for each major category of work are provided in the funding table.

Planning Work Program Amendment

[Planning Work Program Amendments](#) may be required from time to time to detail major shifts in work activities that will impact funding allocations.

Five Year Planning Calendar

The [Five-Year Planning Calendar](#) is a standard document that connects the short-term goals of the annual planning work program to the long term goals and priorities of the RPO. This should be reviewed and revised each year.

Quarterly Report Package

The progress report package is a standard set of documents consisting of the RPO Quarterly [Invoice Cover Letter](#) and the RPO Quarterly [Invoice](#) accompanied by a [Quarterly Expenditure Table \(in Excel format\)](#). Also included in the package are a **current TAC Roster** and Deliverables for the quarter. The package is submitted through the [MPO and RPO Planning Grants Portal](#) on the connect.ncdot.gov.

The Quarterly Invoice details the LPA request for reimbursement of eligible RPO expenses for the quarter with a breakdown of direct and indirect costs. The Quarterly Expenditures table highlights

the transportation planning work accomplished by the LPA over the last quarter and identifies resulting planning work products.

Final Yearly Narrative

The [Final Yearly Narrative](#) is a standard document submitted in conjunction with the final quarterly report of each fiscal year. The report consists of a narrative review of the accomplishments of the RPO over the past year in comparison to the adopted planning work program. The document further describes any significant changes to the LPA, local membership or other concerns that impacted the RPO over the past year.

CTP List of Study Needs

Each calendar year the RPO reviews and prioritizes small urban and county transportation planning study needs for their area. The [CTP List of Study Needs](#) will provide sufficient detail regarding jurisdiction, status of the local development plan, and previous transportation plans and be submitted to NCDOT annually.

TIP Project Prioritization

The RPO develops a list of its region's transportation project requests (including all modes of transportation) and enters these projects into NCDOT's prioritization process. As part of the process, the RPO will rank or score individual projects to show their relative priority within the region. For more information regarding the process please refer to: <http://www.ncdot.gov/performance/reform/>.

TIP Review and Comment

After a draft STIP is released by NCDOT for public comment, the RPO reviews all information for projects within its region and makes comments as necessary regarding the accuracy of the information and any local issues or concerns. This process takes place every two years.

Merger Process

RPOs may participate in the Merger process as concurring members. Concurring members have signature authority for Merger projects in their areas and will attend Merger project meetings and adhere to the Project Team Member roles and responsibilities. Merger meetings are scheduled to discuss the progression of the project, the issues, and the steps going forward. For more information regarding the process please refer to: <http://www.ncdot.gov/doh/preconstruct/pe/MERGER01/>.

RPO Manual Updates

From time to time changes to document templates, procedures and timelines may occur and will be reflected in a timely manner in this manual. Proposed changes may be reviewed by NCDOT and RPO staff. The most current version of the manual will be made available on the NCDOT website: <https://connect.ncdot.gov/projects/planning/Pages/MPO-RPO.aspx>.

RPO Program Administration

Reorganizing an RPO

1. Identify three or more contiguous counties with a minimum population of 50,000 that wish to form a RPO.
2. Contact the NCDOT Transportation Planning Branch (TPB) and prospective LPA to discuss the formation or revision of the RPO.
3. Review and revise standard [Memorandum of Understanding \(MOU\)](#) to reflect the desired RPO structure. Submit draft to designated NCDOT staff for review.
4. Prepare final MOU document, reflecting any additional revisions.
5. Present final MOU to each county, the LPA and NCDOT for approval. Original signatures and seals must appear on a single page(s). Municipalities within the boundaries of the proposed RPO may adopt a resolution stating their support for the formation of the proposed RPO within ninety (90) days of final approval.
6. Submit the signed MOU in triplicate to designated NCDOT staff, along with municipal resolutions. One original copy will be returned to the LPA with original signatures.
7. Submit documentation to designated NCDOT staff to verify the LPA has been authorized by its Board to receive funds on behalf of the RPO.
8. Conduct a chartering ceremony in cooperation with NCDOT and participating local officials.
9. Complete the Funding Agreement Process returning all signed copies to NCDOT. One original copy will be returned to the LPA.
10. Present TCC/TAC with a draft [Prospectus](#), [Planning Work Program](#) and [Five-Year Planning Calendar](#) for consideration and approval. Approval of these documents is required prior to receiving reimbursement by NCDOT.

Revising an Existing Memorandum of Understanding

From time to time NCDOT, the LPA or any other [MOU](#) signatory may request a revision to the adopted MOU. Changing the LPA or the membership of RPO counties would trigger a revision to the MOU. Consultation between the LPA, NCDOT and MOU signatories is required to facilitate any revision to an adopted MOU.

- Review and revise the existing MOU to reflect the desired changes. Submit draft to designated NCDOT staff for review.
- Prepare final MOU document, reflecting any additional revisions.
- Present final MOU in to the RPO TCC and TAC for approval.
- Present final MOU to each county, the LPA and NCDOT for approval. Original signatures and seals must appear on a single page(s). Municipalities within the boundaries of the proposed RPO may adopt a resolution stating their support for the revised MOU within ninety (90) days of final approval.
- Submit the signed MOU and the municipal resolutions in triplicate to designated NCDOT staff, along with municipal resolutions. One original copy will be returned to the LPA with original signatures.

Revising an Existing Bylaws

RPOs are required to have [Bylaws](#) that define how meetings will be conducted within the RPO as well as outlining the procedure for various RPO processes. A change to the bylaws typically necessary when some aspects of the bylaws need to be clarified that was not explicitly stated in the bylaws, conflicting laws, a change in the LPA, or an MOU change. In order for the bylaws to have legal standing, the bylaws must be adopted by the TAC and should be signed by the RPO Secretary and the TAC Chairman.

Revising an Existing Funding Agreement

From time to time NCDOT and the LPA may request a revision of the existing Funding Agreement. Changing the LPA or changes in the level of RPO funding level would trigger a revision to the Funding Agreement.

1. Request the TPB RPO Program Manager to provide the LPA Projects Management Unit with the latest copy of the Funding Agreement and the [Agreement Checklist](#).
2. Fill out the Agreement Checklist and forward it along with the latest copy of the Funding Agreement to the designated NCDOT staff listed on the checklist.
3. NCDOT will provide the LPA Project Management Unit with the revised Funding Agreement for approval and signatures.
4. Present final Funding Agreement in to the RPO TCC and TAC.
5. TAC approves the revised funding level.

Preparing a Planning Work Program (PWP) and an Administrative Reporting Schedule

An adopted [PWP](#) and Calendar must be submitted to NCDOT by May 31st to be eligible to receive reimbursement from NCDOT for RPO work activities in the fiscal year beginning July 1st of the same calendar year. Costs incurred on work activities outside an adopted PWP will not be reimbursed.

PWP Timeline

- November** Consult with NCDOT staff, RPO member governments and agencies to identify work tasks, review financial assumptions for the upcoming fiscal year and develop [PWP](#) and [Five-Year Planning Calendar](#).
- January** [Funding Award Letter](#) is received (digitally and by hard copy) detailing available funds and required local match. Prepare draft PWP for designated NCDOT staff review within 30 days of receipt of the funding letter. Release Draft PWP for public review if required by an adopted [Public Involvement Plan](#).
- February** NCDOT staff comments on PWP, Five-Year Calendar, and Administrative Reporting Schedule returned to RPO within 45 days of submittal to NCDOT. Prepare revisions to PWP and schedule if required.
- April** Conduct TCC/TAC review and adoption process. Prepare revisions to PWP if required. An original signature of the TAC Chair must appear on the adopted PWP.
- May** Transmit one (1) digital copy of the adopted and signed PWP (PDF format), one (1) digital copy of the PWP (Excel format), and one (1) digital copy of the Administrative Reporting Schedule to designated NCDOT staff by May 31st.
- June** [PWP Approval Letter](#) issued by NCDOT.

PWP Guidance

- The Miscellaneous Expenses item is restricted to **no more than 10% of the total RPO budget**.
- The use of private consultants by an RPO is permitted for the amount of **up to \$5,000** with prior approval (No RFP is required),
- Funds which have not been expended at the end of the fiscal year do not carry forward.
- If no comments are received by the dates listed above, proceed with review and adoption process according to above timeline.

Revising an Adopted PWP

Revisions to an adopted Planning Work Program are required if there is a significant change in budget, work tasks or expenditure allocation and could be processed throughout the fiscal year (as long as there will be adequate time for the public involvement and approval process through TCC, TAC and NCDOT before the end of fiscal year). All revisions to the adopted PWP must be completed by May 31st of the same fiscal year. No amendments will be processed past this date.

PWP Amendment Guidance

Review adopted PWP to determine if changes to work tasks are considered Major or Minor revisions:

Minor PWP Revisions

- **A variance of up to \$2,500 for a category** is considered a minor revision and is allowed without amendment if approved in advance by the TPB RPO Coordinator.
 - NCDOT staff will send e-mail to RPO with revision approval.

Major PWP Revisions

- **A variance of more than \$2,500** for a category is considered a major revision and requires amendment and must be reviewed and approved by both, the TCC and TAC.
 - Prepare [Amended PWP](#) and [Planning Work Program Amendment Template](#) noting added or deleted work tasks. Submit revised PWP documents to designated NCDOT staff for review and approval.
 - NCDOT staff comments are returned to RPO within 10 business days. If no comments are received, proceed with review and adoption process.
 - Conduct public review of the revised PWP if required (as per RPO's [Public Involvement Plan](#)).
 - Conduct TCC/TAC review and adoption process. The original signature of the TAC Chair must appear on the [Planning Work Program Amendment Template](#).
 - Transmit one (1) digital copy of the [Amendment Table](#) of the revised PWP (PDF format) and signed [Planning Work Program Amendment Template](#) and one (1) digital copy of the amended PWP (Excel format) to designated NCDOT staff.

Preparing a Quarterly Report Package

Reimbursement for planning expenses is facilitated through the submittal of a Quarterly Report Package each quarter to NCDOT. The submittal package must include an RPO [Invoice Cover Letter](#), RPO [Invoice](#), [Quarterly Expenditure Table](#) and a current TAC Roster. **First Quarterly**

Invoice Package must include upcoming fiscal year's [Indirect Cost Allocation Plan](#). An RPO must submit products accounted for in the quarterly report package in order for the payment being processed.

Quarterly Report Package Timeline

September 30th **First quarter ends**
November 10th First quarter Report Package due to designated NCDOT staff

December 31st **Second quarter ends**
February 10th Final second Report Package due to designated NCDOT staff

March 31st **Third quarter ends**
May 10th Final third Report Package due to designated NCDOT staff

June 30th **Fourth quarter ends**
August 10th Final fourth Report Package due to designated NCDOT staff

Quarterly Report Package Guidance

- Reimbursement will only be made for qualifying expenses incurred in executing work tasks described in the PWP.
- Quarterly Report Package will not be processed without all of the required documents.
- Quarterly Report Package not received by the dates above will not be processed until the end of the following quarter. If an RPO anticipates that the invoice cannot be submitted on time, contact designated NCDOT staff prior to the deadline or as soon as possible.
- Final submittal of the Quarterly Report Package consists of one (1) digital signed copy uploaded on the [MPO and RPO Planning Grants Portal](#) on the connect.ncdot.gov:
 - [Invoice Cover Letter](#) (PDF Format),
 - [Invoice](#) (PDF Format)
 - [Quarterly Expenditure Table](#) (Excel format)
 - **RPO TAC Roster**
 - Deliverables (submitted via Drop Box)
- Revisions to the Quarterly Report Package may be required based on NCDOT review. NCDOT will request revisions within 10 business days. Requested revisions will be returned to the RPO within 10 days of request. (Process repeats if necessary, with 10 business days each time.) Revisions must be completed prior to the payment being processed.
- Expenses cannot be charged against PWP categories on the quarterly expenditure table without an amount budgeted.
- No more than the total funding allocation shall be reimbursed during the fiscal year.
- The final quarterly report package shall include the [Final Yearly Narrative](#).

Preparing a CTP Study Priority List

A Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP) is a collaborative effort of NCDOT planning staff, RPO staff and local jurisdiction(s). Local jurisdictions may request a CTP or an update to an existing CTP through the RPO.

TPB will provide an updated [CTP List of Study Needs Spreadsheet](#) to the RPOs by **October 1st**. Each RPO must review its local and regional transportation planning needs and present a prioritized CTP List of Study Needs Spreadsheet to designated NCDOT staff by **December 15th** of each year. To be eligible for inclusion on the list, each jurisdiction must have a land development plan approved within the last five (5) years or be willing to undertake a land development planning process in conjunction with the CTP. The listing of a jurisdiction on the priority list does not guarantee that the study will be assigned or initiated and CTP studies may not be assigned in priority order because of funding, staff resources or other constraints. CTP studies may also be initiated by NCDOT in response to project delivery needs. For further information on CTP Study needs process please refer to: [Comprehensive Transportation Plan Prioritization](#) documentation.

Local Project Prioritization

Each RPO is responsible for the development of a prioritized list by mode of its region's transportation projects (including highway, public transportation, bicycle and pedestrian, and rail projects) and the entry of those projects into the state's prioritization process with the SPOT On!line Tool.

<https://gis13.services.ncdot.gov/SpotOn!ine/login.aspx?ReturnUrl=%2fSpotOn!ine%2fdefault.aspx>

Preparing a TIP Priority Needs List

The State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) is prepared by NCDOT on a biennial basis according to a schedule adopted by the Board of Transportation. The identification and prioritization of the RPO TIP project proposals should include significant input from local officials and the public. Specific guidance related to the use of the online database for submitting transportation-related project priorities is provided by NCDOT separately. For more information regarding the process please refer to: <http://www.ncdot.gov/performance/reform/>.

Conducting Evaluations

Evaluation of the RPO program occurs on an annual basis through standardized surveys along with NCDOT's review of work products. The purpose of program evaluation is to ensure that high quality RPO services are being provided and to identify areas for potential improvement. The evaluation process includes opportunities to receive feedback from customers, RPOs, and NCDOT. Individual RPOs participate in the evaluation process through deployment of the survey and assisting member governments with completion of the evaluation tool. TPB staff is responsible for reviewing RPO deliverables and providing feedback to the RPO staff within twelve (12) business days after receiving Quarterly Report Package.

Evaluation Timeline:

August-October	Conduct evaluation
October-November	Designated NCDOT Staff conducts review of the RPO work products.
December	Review combined results. Identify issues; develop elements in the PWP that respond to issues identified in the survey results.
January	Conduct one-on-one RPO review meetings.
March	Conduct RPO review of TPB staff.

Evaluation Guidance

- [RPO Product Evaluation](#) is conducted yearly.
- Evaluation results will be compiled by TPB Staff. Analysis and interpretation of survey results will be done cooperatively by RPO and TPB staff. Summary results will be provided to the RPO in advance of one-on-one RPO review meetings.
- Concerns identified through the survey process will be tracked from year to year by RPO and TPB staff to ensure adequate progress is made toward resolving related issues.
- Consistently poor evaluation results or inadequate progress on identified issues may result in a request by NCDOT for alternate staffing or a change of the LPA.

Accounting

The LPA shall establish a separate account for the RPO Funds for each fiscal year and shall record all transactions in accordance with acceptable accounting procedures, as approved by the NCDOT. The account established for planning funds will be included in the annual audit of the agency. [Article 49 CFR 18](#) outlines standards for grantee financial management systems. Time spent for staff services on work provided for in the PWP should be recorded by work task standard time sheets for each individual and filed for audit purposes. Invoices must conform to [RPO Audit Procedures](#).

Pursuant to Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Regulations, RPOs must furnish its Taxpayer Identification Number (TIN) to the State. If this number is not provided, the RPOs may be subject to a 20% withholding on each payment. To avoid this 20% withholding and to ensure that accurate tax information is reported to the Internal Revenue Service and the State, the RPOs must use [W-9](#) form to provide the requested information exactly as it appears on file with the IRS.

Annual Indirect Cost Reports

Each RPO is required to annually submit current fiscal year's Indirect **Cost Allocation Plan** to designated NCDOT staff by November 10th. The plan must include all the information provided in the [example](#). Indirect costs are allowable with the submittal and approval of an indirect allocation plan.

Audits

A copy of the LPA audit is obtained for the previous fiscal year from the Local Government Commission each year. Once the final payment has been made for the fiscal year, the contract for the year will be closed and no further payments may be made. These may be updated from year to year. Refer to the [NCDOT External Audit Section](#) for current procedures and to [RPO Audit Procedures](#) for reference.

Expenditures

Expenditures will be reimbursed based solely on the provisions of [Senate Bill 1195 which amended General Statute 136, Article 17](#) as they relate to planning requirements. Reimbursement will only be made for qualifying expenses incurred in executing work tasks described in the PWP. Expenses fall into two categories: direct and indirect. Indirect items must be identified in the approved LPA indirect cost plan as directed by OMB Circular A-87. Items not addressed below will be considered on a case by case basis.

Permitted Direct Expenditures

- Salaries and payroll additive costs, transportation expenses, office expenses and expendable supplies related to executing work tasks within an approved PWP.
- Printing, advertising, copying, computer processing, mapping and aerial photography costs as related to executing work tasks within an approved PWP.
- The purchase of special equipment and materials required to execute work tasks within an approved PWP. Purchases for the exclusive use of the RPO must be made in accordance with NCDOT requirements related to minority business enterprises (MBE). If equipment is to be used by other units within the LPA, then expenditure must be allocated upfront or a method developed to assess costs as they occur.
- Reimbursements to other LPA agencies, local governments or state agencies for eligible expenditures incurred in executing work tasks within an approved PWP.
- Auditing costs associated with fulfilling State requirements.

Permitted Indirect Expenditures

- Accounting
- Building Lease & Maintenance
- Exhibits
- Payroll Preparation
- Taxes
- Audit Services
- Communications
- Materials & Supplies
- Personnel Administration
- Training and Education
- Budgeting
- Fringe Benefits
- Memberships, Subscriptions & Professional Activities
- Procurement Services

Permitted Expenditures, with Prior Approval by NCDOT

(RPO must include price quote when seeking approval for expenditures in this category)

- Computers/Tablets
- Insurance & Indemnification
- Equipment
- Building Space & Related Facilities
- Professional Services
- Capital Expenditures
- Out-of-State Travel (Training/Conference)
- Software

Unacceptable Expenditures

- Bad Debt
- Interest & Other Finance Costs
- Entertainment
- Management Studies
- Proposal Costs
- Contributions & Donations
- Under-Recovery of Costs on Grant Agreements
- Governor's Expenses
- Pre-Agreement Costs
- Commuting Expenses
- Fines & Penalties
- Contingencies
- Legislative Expenses
- Meeting Expenses for Meals

Procurement, Suspension and Debarment

Each LPA is required to comply with 49CFR 18.35 which requires entities to not make any award or permit any award at any tier to any party which is debarred or suspended or is otherwise excluded from or ineligible for participation in Federal assistance programs under Executive Order 12549, "Debarment and Suspension." The LPA must maintain conflict of interest statements with respect to purchases of goods and services.

Each RPO is required to have procedures in place to annually verify that vendors providing goods and services under a project to the RPO have not been suspended or debarred by the [Federal, State](#) or City/County Government. The adherence to the procurement, suspension and debarment procedure will be reviewed through the annual auditing process.

Conducting RPO Meetings

It is recommended that each RPO conducts at least four (4) meetings per calendar year. Meetings may consist of separate or joint TAC and TCC meetings and should occur at a time and

place that supports broad participation by its members. Electronic meetings are permitted as long as public notice is given and a location for public participation in the meeting is provided. A meeting must have a quorum to conduct businesses of any type. A quorum is defined as 51% of the voting membership as outlined in your adopted bylaws.

- The TAC, TCC and any subcommittees are considered public bodies under North Carolina law and are subject to the [Open Meetings Law and Open Records Law](#).
- An alternate may be appointed to attend meetings should the member not be able to attend. Alternates should be identified by position in the bylaws and by name in the membership roster. Vacant seats as defined in the bylaws will not count against the quorum.
- No secret ballot voting is allowed under North Carolina Law. However, written ballots are allowed provided they are signed by each voter and included in the meeting record after the vote is taken. Written ballots shall be available for public inspection immediately following the meeting at which the written vote took place until the minutes of the meeting are approved.
- A schedule of regular meetings should be kept with the clerk of the county in which the meetings are held, with the LPA's clerk, or as described in the adopted bylaws. If the schedule is changed, the changes should be given to the clerk at least one week prior to the meeting.
- Notice for meetings not listed on the schedule, other than an emergency meeting, should be posted at the door of the usual meeting room(s), public notice bulletin board and delivered to each media outlet and any individual that has filed a written request for notice 48 hours prior to the meeting.
- For an emergency meeting, the committee shall provide notice to local media outlets that have filed a request. Notice for emergency meetings shall be given by the same method used to notify the members of the committee and shall be given immediately following notice to those members.

RPO TAC Ethics Obligations

For TAC members, State Ethics Requirements apply. Specifically, TAC members must complete a Statement of Economic Interest (SEI) annually. An individual appointed to a TAC **may not assume his or her position on the TAC** (and thus may not participate in TAC meetings as a member, including voting on matters before the TAC) **until they have filed: (1)** a complete Statement of Economic Interest (SEI); and **(2)** a complete Real Estate Disclosure Form (RED) with the State Ethics Commission (Commission); and **(3) received** the Commission's written evaluation of their filed SEI.

In addition, **annually** all voting TAC members and their alternates are **required to timely file** a complete SEI and a complete RED with the State Ethics Commission on or before April 15th. **The yearly filing period commences January 1st and ends April 15th**; electronic filing is encouraged. SEIs and REDs filed after April 15th are untimely and subject to penalties and sanctions. It is suggested to conduct SEC orientation session at the beginning of each TAC term.

For further information on SEIs and REDs and your filing requirements go to www.ethicscommission.nc.gov. For questions regarding SEIs and REDs and the filing requirements contact the State Ethics Commission at SEI@doa.nc.gov or by calling 919-715-2071. For

information and questions regarding GS 136-200.2 and -21, including conflicts of interest, contact Norma Houston at nhouston@sog.unc.edu.

As of October 1, 2014, failure to timely file the required SEI and RED will result in a \$250 fine for each late or incomplete form, resulting in a total fine of \$500 if both forms are filed late or are incomplete. In addition, as of October 1, 2014, failure to file the complete SEI and the complete RED within 60 days from receipt of notice of failure to file will result in referral to the State Bureau of Investigation for investigation and possible prosecution. (See official [NCEC notice](#)).

TAC members must avoid a conflict of interest. No member or their alternate may participate in any action as a TAC member if the action may result in a reasonably foreseeable financial benefit to the member, the member's extended family, or any business with which the member is associated. A TAC member or their alternate may participate in an action of the RPO if the action is ministerial only and does not require the exercise of discretion.

TAC members must disclose a conflict of interest in writing. TAC members and their alternates have a duty to promptly disclose in writing to the TAC any actual or potential conflicts of interest, using the [TAC Abstention Form](#). These disclosures are a public record and must be attached to the minutes of the meeting in which any discussion or vote was taken by the TAC related to that conflicts disclosure.

TAC members must not use or disclose confidential information. TAC members and their alternates shall not use or disclose any nonpublic information gained as a member in a way that would affect a personal financial interest of the member, the member's extended family or a business with which the member is associated.

TAC member who is no longer serving on the board should be taken off the list, notification email should be distributed to the State Ethics Commission at SEI@doa.nc.gov.

RPO Records

Records related to RPO activities and work products must be maintained in perpetuity by the LPA. If the LPA is changed, all records must be transferred.

Any records pertaining to the RPO must be made available to the public for free or for a minimal fee that represents the actual cost of copying. Membership records, meeting minutes showing attendance and voting outcomes, documents, electronic files, GIS layers, recordings and any other documentation are subject to public inspection unless they meet criteria for exemption as described by the Public Records Statutes.

RPO Equipment

Any equipment purchased for the sole benefit and use of the RPO shall be maintained through its useful life as defined by the LPA. An equipment inventory must be kept current. If the LPA is changed, all RPO equipment must be transferred or the agreed upon dollar value of RPO equipment must be transferred to the new LPA.

Transportation Acronyms

AADT	Annual Average Daily Traffic
AASHTO	American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act (1990)
AFV	Alternative Fuel Vehicle
AMPO	Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations
APTA	American Public Transportation Association
AQ	Air Quality
BOT	Board of Transportation (NCDOT)
3-C	Continuing, Cooperative, Comprehensive
CAA	Clean Air Act (1970)
CAAA	Clean Air Act Amendments (1990)
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations (Federal Register)
CIP	Capital Improvement Program
CMAQ	Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality
CMS	Congestion Management System
CO	Carbon Monoxide
CO ₂	Carbon Dioxide
CTP	Comprehensive Transportation Plan
CTPP	Census Transportation Planning Package
DBE	Disadvantaged Business Enterprise
DEIS	Draft Environmental Impact Statement
EA	Environmental Assessment
EAC	Early Action Compact (EPA)
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency (Federal)
FAA	Federal Aviation Administration
FFY	Federal Fiscal Year (Oct 1 – Sept 30)
FHWA	Federal Highway Administration
FMCSA	Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration
FR	Federal Register
FTA	Federal Transit Administration
GARVEE	Grant Anticipation Revenue Vehicle (NC Bond)

GIS	Geographic Information System
HOV	High Occupancy Vehicle (Lane)
HOT	High Occupancy Toll (Lane)
HRRR	High Risk Rural Road
HSIP	Highway Safety Improvement Program
ILT	Interagency Leadership Team
ISTEA	Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (1991)
ITRE	Institute for Transportation Research and Education (NC State)
ITS	Intelligent Transportation System
LOS	Level of Service
LPA	Lead Planning Agency
L RTP	Long Range Transportation Plan (MPO)
MOA	Memorandum of Agreement
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MPO	Metropolitan Planning Organization
MSA	Metropolitan Statistical Area
MTIP	Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program
MUTCD	Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices
NAA	Non-Attainment Area
NAAQS	National Ambient Air Quality Standards
NADO	National Association of Development Organizations
NCAMPO	North Carolina Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations
NCARPO	North Carolina Association of Rural Planning Organizations
NCDOT	North Carolina Department of Transportation
NCPTA	North Carolina Public Transportation Association
NCTA	North Carolina Turnpike Authority
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act (1969)
NHS	National Highway System
NO _x	Nitrogen Oxide
PDEA	Project Development and Environmental Analysis Branch (NCDOT)
PM 2.5	Particulate Matter, 2.5 micrometers
PPP	Public Involvement Plan
PTD	Public Transportation Division (NCDOT)
PWP	Planning Work Program

RGP	Rural General Public (Transit)
ROAP	Rural Operating Assistance Program (Transit)
ROW	Right Of Way
RPO	Rural Planning Organization
RSA	Road Safety Audit
SAFETEA-LU	Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act – A Legacy for Users (2005)
SFY	State Fiscal Year (July 1 – June 30)
SIP	State Implementation Plan (Air Quality)
SPOT	Strategic Planning Office of Transportation (NCDOT)
SRTS	Safe Routes to School
STAA	Surface Transportation Assistance Act (1982)
STIP	State Transportation Improvement Program
STP	Surface Transportation Program
SOV	Single Occupancy Vehicle
TAC	Transportation Advisory Committee (Local Elected Officials)
TAZ	Transportation Analysis Zone
TCC	Technical Coordinating Committee (Local Staff)
TCM	Traffic Calming/Control Measure
TDM	Transportation Demand Management
TEA	Transportation Enhancement Activity
TEA-21	Transportation Equity Act for the 21 st Century (1998)
TIA	Traffic Impact Analysis
TIP	Transportation Improvement Program
TMA	Transportation Management Area (population of 200,000+)
TOD	Transit Oriented Development
TPB	Transportation Planning Branch (NCDOT)
TRB	Transportation Research Board
USDOT	United States Department of Transportation
UAB	Urbanized Area Boundary
USC	United States Code
VMT	Vehicle Miles of Travel
VOC	Volatile Organic Compounds

Reference Material List

WWW Links and Reference Documents:

[Senate Bill 1195](#)

[Article 49 CFR 18](#)

[TIP Prioritization](#)

[Merger Process](#)

[Open Meetings Law and Open Records Law](#)

[NCDOT External Audit Section](#)

[CTP Study Needs Documentation](#)

[Prospectus](#)

[Federal debarment website](#)

[State debarment website](#)

Standard Documents - Examples:

[Funding Award Letter](#)

[PWP Approval Letter](#)

[Five-Year Planning Calendar](#)

[RPO Quarterly Invoice Cover Letter](#)

[RPO Quarterly Invoice Letter](#)

[Final Yearly Narrative](#)

[Indirect Cost Report](#)

Standard Documents - Templates:

[CTP List of Study Needs Spreadsheet](#)

[PWP-Invoice-Amendment Templates](#)

[Memorandum of Understanding \(MOU\)](#)

[Bylaws](#)

[Public Involvement Policy \(PIP\)](#)

[RPO Product Evaluation Form](#)

[RPO Audit Procedures](#)

[TAC Abstention Form](#)

[W-9 Form](#)