

**U.S. DOT Federal Railroad Administration
Office of Passenger and Freight Programs**

Monitoring Procedure 03 – Special Tasks and Technical Assistance

1.0 PURPOSE

This Monitoring Procedure (MP) describes the performance and deliverables FRA expects from the Monitoring and Technical Assistance Contractor (MTAC) for special tasks and technical assistance activities. By definition, special tasks and technical assistance are other than, and in addition to, standard oversight activities performed under other MPs.

2.0 KEY PRINCIPLES

As unique and specific assignments to MTAC contractors, when warranted by program or project circumstances, MTAC contractors may be asked to perform Special Tasks and/or Technical Assistance work. This work requires MTAC contractors to demonstrate initiative, creativity, and subject matter expertise. Regardless of the scope or scale of the assignment, the work should be performed with the following broad goals in mind:

1. Advancing the knowledge base among Grantees
2. Advancing the state-of-the-practice in the industry
3. Improving FRA's oversight capabilities for major capital rail projects
4. Achieving higher-quality projects that meet goals, budgets, and schedules

3.0 REQUIRED DOCUMENTS

Before performing the review, the MTAC should obtain relevant documents, some of which may be identified by FRA.

4.0 SCOPE OF WORK

Technical assistance can help Grantees overcome obstacles and problems that arise during project execution. Typically, when an MTAC perceives (through monitoring reviews of the Grantee) a key benefit that could be obtained or a deficiency in knowledge or approach that could be remedied, the MTAC recommends technical assistance. FRA wants to encourage a culture of learning and sharing of knowledge among its rail program participants. Providing technical assistance can accelerate learning without relieving Grantees of their project responsibilities.

As an example, the MTAC assigned to Region 1 Northeast is authorized through a job order to provide railroad signaling and communications technical assistance to a Grantee in Region 6 Central. The Grantee, within its authority and responsibility for the project, decides how to proceed while taking into account the instruction given.

While the MTAC's near-term focus is the Grantee in Region 6, the technical assistance may be of interest to many FRA rail program participants and the industry in general. During preparation of materials, the MTAC should bear this wider audience in mind.

The MTAC may participate in FRA-sponsored or authorized venues with Grantees in any region of the country, or with groups at national or regional conferences or local meetings. Special tasks and technical assistance activities may include preparation, attendance, participation in discussions, presentation of materials, and representation of FRA. Presentations or teaching, training, and tutoring may be in the following formats:

1. Structured sessions, similar to a teacher-student dynamic, such as:
 - a. With a single Grantee and its team
 - b. With groups in day-long or multi-day courses, teleconferences, or webinars
2. Group or peer review workshops focused on a specific project
3. Presentation in conferences or meetings, sponsored by FRA or others such as legislative staff, other executive branch offices, industry associations, community groups, or professional organizations

The MTAC may develop materials such as briefings, agendas, papers, presentations, analyses, and other documents, and submit materials to FRA for its use and possible publication. Sample topics include:

1. Capital program oversight, including improvements to the MTAC Oversight Program
4. Edits and additions to the Monitoring Procedures (MP)
5. Oversight methods, including the following examples:
 - a. Cost estimating
 - b. Scheduling
 - c. Assessing and managing risk
 - d. Railroad operations modeling
6. Case studies of capital projects on strategies and best practices for project development and delivery, including the following examples:
 - a. Infrastructure and service planning
 - b. Organizations of leadership and project teams
 - c. Environmental reviews
 - d. Real estate management
 - e. Risk assessments
 - f. Vehicle design and acquisition
 - g. Positive train control, signaling, and communications
 - h. Railroad safety
 - i. Railroad and station design
 - j. Construction phasing and staging
 - k. Testing before operations
7. Analyses of trends in the following example areas:
 - a. Industry (agency or industry histories and practices)
 - b. Projects (costs, cost increases, schedule, risks, etc.)
 - c. Technology (vehicles, signaling, communications, etc.)