

## Questions & Answers

*If you would like additional information, call the Volpe Center's Chief Financial Officer at 617-494-2284 or the Executive Officer for Policy, Strategic Initiatives and Outreach at 617-494-2491, or, if you have worked previously with the Volpe Center, call your project manager.*

### **Q. When may the Volpe Center start work?**

**A.** When (1) the appropriate agreement has been signed by both parties, and (2) funds have been received by the Volpe Center.

### **Q. Are funds tied to specific projects?**

**A.** Yes. A project's funds may only be used for that project to ensure compliance with appropriation law and the intent of Congress.

### **Q. Can a multi-year project be funded partially or entirely at the outset of the project?**

**A.** A customer may fund a multi-year project in segments, or in total at project initiation.

### **Q. Are Volpe Center costs competitive?**

**A.** Yes. The cost of the Volpe Center's Federal staff is below private sector rates for similar talent; and when needed, the Volpe Center is skilled at selecting and employing cost-effective contractor support. The Volpe Center focuses on providing the best value for its customers.

### **Q. How does the Volpe Center charge customers for work performed?**

**A.** All customers are charged in the same manner for: (1) direct costs incurred for work performed on their project; and (2) an equitable share of the Volpe Center's indirect costs. There is no profit or fee.

### **Q. How does the Volpe Center manage projects?**

**A.** Volpe Center project managers are accountable for all aspects of their projects, including the highest quality deliverables, financial and schedule control, and when applicable, wise use of contractor resources. Project management plans, program reviews and monthly progress reports ensure our customers understand how work is being accomplished and that project spending is consistent with authorized plans.

### **Q. What size projects does the Volpe Center perform?**

**A.** There are no minimum or maximum size constraints. Projects as small as \$5K to over \$100M for multi-year projects have been accomplished.

### **Q. Can large projects be financially controlled at the task level?**

**A.** Yes. Our financial system readily accommodates task budget controls.

### **Q. What progress reports will I receive?**

**A.** Technical progress reporting is negotiated as part of your agreement with the Volpe Center. Monthly financial reports are sent to the point-of-contact identified in your agreement. Additional detailed status reports may be provided by the Volpe Center project manager as needed.

### **Q. What happens to unexpended funds on completed projects?**

**A.** Unexpended funds are returned to the customer.

### **Q. May customers terminate projects and have funds returned to them?**

**A.** Yes. The Volpe Center will return all unexpended funds (after all project and close-out costs have been covered).

### **Q. Is a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) necessary for non-DOT customers to work with the Volpe Center?**

**A.** No. However, having a MOU in place may facilitate initiating projects within your organization.

### **Q. Can the Volpe Center protect proprietary data?**

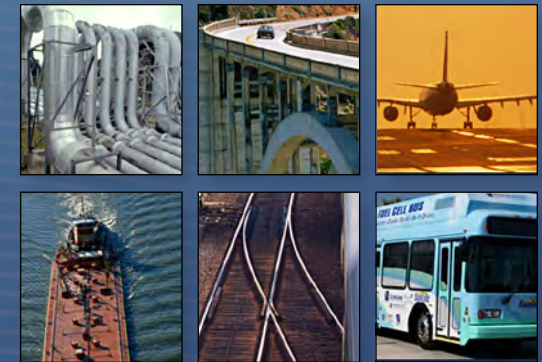
**A.** Yes. Several Federal statutes enable and require the Volpe Center to protect proprietary information.

### **Q. Does the Volpe Center have to comply with Federal rules and regulations?**

**A.** Yes. We are a Federal organization adept at meeting the highest standards of U.S. Government process integrity with speed and efficiency.

# How to Start Work

## WORKING WITH THE John A. Volpe National Transportation Systems Center



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[www.volpe.dot.gov](http://www.volpe.dot.gov)

U.S. Department of Transportation  
Research and Innovative Technology Administration

## For All Customers

*The Volpe Center is authorized by Congress to conduct business through its Working Capital Fund Statute, 49 U.S.C. §328. This order can be viewed via the following link: [http://assembler.law.cornell.edu/uscode/html/uscode49/uscode49\\_00000328----000-.html](http://assembler.law.cornell.edu/uscode/html/uscode49/uscode49_00000328----000-.html)*

### About the Volpe Center

An innovative, Federal, fee-for service organization, the Volpe Center, part of the U.S. Department of Transportation's (DOT) Research and Innovative Technology Administration (RITA) in Cambridge, Massachusetts, is an internationally recognized center of transportation logistics and expertise. The Volpe Center develops integrated, multi-modal approaches to critical transportation issues. We perform work for U.S. DOT as well as other Federal, state, local, and international agencies and entities.

### The Volpe Center may perform work that ...

- involves research, development, testing, evaluation, analysis, or related activities
- furthers the transportation enterprise and its future development
- uses Volpe Center staff to add managerial or technical value
- has manageable risks

### The Volpe Center is Federal, non-profit, fee-for-service

- no direct appropriation from Congress
- funding authority and funds transfer must precede work
- Federal funds at the Volpe Center are not subject to Economy Act limitations
- charges reflect only actual costs; i.e., no profit
- work is performed on a best effort (not fixed price) basis

### A Volpe Center project manager is your primary contact.

If your organization's legal, budget, accounting, or procurement officials need details on Volpe Center operations, their counterparts at the Volpe Center are available.

## For U.S. DOT Organizations

*U.S. DOT agencies are authorized to employ the Volpe Center through U.S. DOT Order 2300.8, Financing Activities at the Department of Transportation/Research and Innovative Technology Administration's Volpe National Transportation Systems Center. This order can be viewed via the following link: <http://volpenet.volpe.dot.gov/iaa/docs/dot2300.8.pdf>*

### How to Initiate Projects

- Develop, with Volpe Center participation, a basic Statement of Work (SOW). SOWs describe the general scope, level of effort, preliminary cost budget estimates, and deliverables of the project. The initial task of a SOW may be for the Volpe Center to develop a more detailed project implementation plan.
- Create an Intra-agency Agreement (IAA) documenting the bilateral agreement. The IAA is recorded on DOT Form 2300.1a (or another form which includes the same data) and is effective when signed by both parties. The SOW must be incorporated by reference in the IAA.
- Since the Volpe Center receives no appropriated funding, its only source of funding for performance of work is through its IAAs with our customers. As such, we cannot start work until the IAA is executed by both parties.

### Approval Time

- The Volpe Center's project managers can inform you of your agency's IAA approval processes and time lines.
- Turn-around time at the Volpe Center for IAAs is usually a few days.

### Funds Obligation

Funds on IAAs are considered obligated by your agency immediately upon IAA approval, regardless of when the Volpe Center receives cash advances or expends the funds.

## For Other Federal Organizations

*The Volpe Center's Working Capital Fund Statute 49 U.S.C. §328, constitutes specific statutory authority for interagency transactions between the Volpe Center and other Federal agencies, independent of the Economy Act. Alternatively, an agency may rely on other agency-specific statutory authority available to it.*

### How to Initiate Projects

- Develop, with Volpe Center participation, a basic Statement of Work (SOW). SOWs describe the general scope, level of effort, preliminary cost budget estimates, and deliverables of the project. The initial task of a SOW may be used to develop a more detailed project implementation plan.
- Process a request for an interagency agreement or equivalent through your agency's budget or contracting office. Other acceptable forms include Military Interdepartmental Purchase Requests (MIPRs), Reimbursement Agreements (RA), and Interagency Purchase Requests.
- The SOW and funding document constitute a RA.

### Funds Obligation

Funds on RAs are considered obligated by your agency immediately upon RA approval, regardless of when the Volpe Center receives cash advances or extends the funds.

## For Non-Federal Customers

*(The Volpe Center is authorized to perform work for non-Federal customers through its Working Capital Fund. Non-Federal customers include state and local governments, other public authorities, private organizations, and foreign countries.)*

### How to Initiate Projects

- Develop an Agreement, for approval by your organization and the Volpe Center, that describes the project's general scope, level of effort, deliverables, funding, and period of performance.
- Advance payment to the Volpe Center to enable work to begin.