

Who we are:

Transportation is so basic that many of us overlook its overwhelming importance in our daily lives. Practically everything used in our homes, offices, or schools across Tennessee – from furniture to food items to clothing – requires a large and complex transportation network. The Tennessee Department of Transportation provides citizens of Tennessee and travelers with one of the best transportation systems in the country. TDOT is a multimodal agency with responsibilities in building and maintaining roads, aviation, public transit, waterways, railroads, cycling and walking. Our involvement ranges from airport improvements to funding transit buses to planning for river ports. The Department of Transportation has approximately 3,500 employees with four statewide region facilities in Knoxville, Chattanooga, Nashville, and Jackson.



Strategic Planning, Research and Innovation Director Strategic Planning, Research, and Innovation Division \$164,448 annually

Job Overview

The Strategic Planning, Research, and Innovation Director provides leadership, guidance, and professional development to Team Leads and Technical Specialists by fostering a culture of empowerment, clear communication, and delegated responsibility. This position ensures the delivery of strategic planning, performance management, and program management expertise that advances TDOT's strategic vision, organizational goals, and research and innovation program objectives. This position collaborates with TDOT Executive Leadership and Divisions to shape the Department's strategic direction, advocating for organizational efficiencies and guiding the development of section budgets, research priorities, and innovation initiatives that align with and advance the Department's mission and strategic goals.

This position will maintain the availability of resources that provide for the success of the Strategic Planning, Research, and Innovation Division. This position empowers staff to implement national best practices that drive innovation, improve performance and efficiency, and ensure alignment with the Department's strategic objectives. As the division leader, this position is responsible for maintaining broad knowledge and perspective that supports strategic agility within the division, promoting ethical behavior, and creating an environment for success that reinforces a focus on action.

Essential Job Responsibilities:

Collaborate with TDOT leadership to strategically manage resources, optimize staff utilization, and oversee financial performance within the Strategic Planning, Research, and Innovation Division. Provide direction and alignment in advancing organizational planning efforts, delivering on performance reporting requirements, fulfilling all elements of the State Planning and Research Work Program, and driving innovative initiatives that support the Department's strategic goals.

Oversee the management of policy-level direction and institutional knowledge development for the Strategic Planning, Research, and Innovation Division within a matrix organizational structure. Lead the creation and maintenance of policies, procedures, guidelines, and performance metrics that ensure compliance with federal and state requirements, integrate industry best practices, and advance planning, programming, and performance measurement processes. Foster a culture of knowledge continuity and professional development that strengthens the Division's long-term capacity and supports succession planning by equipping future leaders with the tools, frameworks, and institutional insights necessary to sustain and enhance TDOT's strategic priorities.

Lead efforts to embed a strong connection between quality and work outcomes by overseeing the development and implementation of standards for the Strategic Planning, Research, and Innovation Division. Collaborate with the Bureau of Planning to ensure alignment and consistency. Champion a culture of excellence by maintaining high-quality deliverables, routinely executing quality control checks.

Provide strategic leadership and partnership in the development and administration of Grant Programs, with a primary focus on planning research initiatives conducted by academic institutions. Oversee the full project lifecycle post-contract execution, including scope definition, schedule adherence, budget tracking, and risk management, to ensure alignment with program goals and departmental priorities. Lead the coordination of contract deliverables, monitor progress against key milestones, and ensure that all grant-related activities remain within approved timelines and funding parameters. Manage the timely review, approval, and processing of invoices in accordance with contract terms, and ensure compliance with applicable policies, reporting requirements, and financial accountability standards.

Oversee business planning processes and timelines in coordination with TDOT executive leadership to develop draft 4-year strategic plans and annual Customer Focused Government plans, while ensuring alignment between the Governor's Operational Priorities, organizational performance measurement principles, organizational goals, and individual performance planning. Maintain awareness of TDOT's planning and risk environments and an understanding of goals, objectives and action steps of the Department's other high-level plans, working to integrate these activities within the strategic and operational business plans as appropriate. Ensure research and innovation opportunities pursued support and inform TDOT's organizational goals through competent knowledge management techniques and processes.

Champion a customer-focused culture within the Strategic Planning, Research, and Innovation Division by fostering responsive communication, accurate documentation, and active engagement with internal and external partners. Lead the development of clear training and communication materials to ensure stakeholders understand their roles, responsibilities, and opportunities for involvement in TDOT's research and innovation programs, both internally and through national forums such as TRB, AASHTO, and Cooperative Research Programs. Promote organizational alignment by ensuring all TDOT employees are informed of the department's mission, vision, and strategic priorities, and understand how their contributions support its success.

Guide the development and implementation of a tracking mechanism in partnership with the TDOT Information Technology Division to ensure the scope, schedule, budget, and quality of all Strategic Planning, Research, and Innovation Division deliverables support the delivery of the Department's Research Work Program while also ensuring compliance with Federal and State regulations, laws, standards and policies. Facilitate effective collaboration with TDOT executive leadership and other leaders involved in managing performance and quality. Oversee systems dedicated to the monitoring of Key Performance Indicators (KPI) and milestones of TDOT's Strategic Plan and annual CFG operational plan, as well as general progress toward the successful achievement of organizational results.

Maintain a comprehensive understanding of federal regulations related to Transportation Performance Management (TPM) target setting, reporting, and Research, Development, and Technology Transfer (RD&T) activities. Ensure all TDOT responsibilities associated with performance target setting, reporting, communication, and execution of the State Planning and Research (SPR) Work Program remain compliant with federal requirements. Collaborate proactively with TDOT leadership and data-reporting units to align research initiatives, innovation efforts, and performance targets with broader agency goals, planning documents, and reporting cycles. Establish regular coordination touchpoints to integrate research findings, performance data, and strategic objectives, fostering consistency and mutual reinforcement across TDOT programs. Oversee timely updates to ancillary documents supporting TPM or research activities, ensuring responsiveness to evolving federal guidance and agency needs.

Ensure that the Strategic Planning, Research, and Innovation Division deliverables are consistent, predictable, and repeatable to provide consistently high levels of achievement, mitigation of risk, and an established track record of success. Develop and monitor performance metrics that accurately reflect the Division's responsibilities and overall contributions to the Department's work program. Manage change by clarifying the vision, taking ownership of the change, communicating effectively, remaining transparent, and holding yourself and others accountable throughout the process.

Qualifications

- Bachelor's Degree
- 10 years of demonstrated competency in strategic planning or public administration, business administration, transportation planning, environmental science, data science, or statistics, engineering, public policy, organizational development, economics or finance, mathematics or statistics, continuous improvement, project management or a related field that includes at least:
 - 2 years of demonstrated competency in supervision
 - 2 years of demonstrated competency in management

Ideal Candidate

The Strategic Planning, Research, and Innovation Director is a leader, collaborator, and relationship builder. They expend time and effort exuding adaptability and focus to realize the agency's desired outcomes. The Strategic Planning, Research, and Innovation Director is a motivator who instills high standards of performance, quality, and effectiveness throughout the Division. They help create a culture of accomplishment and commitment within the Division by communicating effectively and clearly, setting reasonable expectations, and delegating responsibility judiciously. The Strategic Planning, Research, and Innovation Director is recognized as a thoughtful leader who generates and encourages cooperation among Division staff in daily interaction with others inside and outside the agency. They are a good steward of agency resources and workforce.

General Work Conditions

Yes / No

☒ ☒ ☐ ☐ is this position generally performed in an office environment?

☐ ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒ Will work for this position be frequently performed in a field environment and may sometimes require working in inclement weather, working in a construction site, being exposed to heavy construction equipment, and doing extensive walking?

☐ ☒ ☒ ☐ ☐ is this position a combination of office and field environment?

☒ ☐ ☐ Is an alternative work schedule including work from home eligible for this position? If yes, how many days will it be work from home and how many days in office?

-Days from home: up to 2 days

-Days from office: up to 3 days

☐ ☒ ☒ ☒ Is this position required to work under exposure to inclement weather and environmental conditions?

☒ ☐ ☐ ☐ Will this position require travel including overnight?

Physical Requirements	Select the frequency of each physical activity. The activity must be related to the position and consistent with business necessity.			
Physical Activity Required	None	Occasional (less than 1/3)	Frequent (1/3 to 2/3)	Regular (more than 2/3)
Standing	☐	☒	☐	☐
Walking	☐	☒	☐	☐
Bending	☐	☒	☐	☐
Reaching/stretching overhead	☒	☐	☐	☐
Crouching or stooping	☒	☐	☐	☐
Balancing	☒	☐	☐	☐
Pushing or pulling	☒	☐	☐	☐
Repetitive use of hands/arms	☐	☐	☐	☒
Repetitive use of legs	☒	☐	☐	☐
Grasping	☐	☐	☐	☒
Lifting – check the frequency for each weight range below. If the job doesn’t require any lifting activities, check “None” on each line below.				
Up to 20 pounds	☐	☒	☐	☐
21 - 50 pounds	☒	☐	☐	☐
51 – 75 pounds	☒	☐	☐	☐
Carrying - check the frequency for each weight range below. If the job doesn’t require any carrying activities, check “None” on each line below.				
Up to 20 pounds	☐	☒	☐	☐
21 - 50 pounds	☒	☐	☐	☐
51 - 75 pounds	☒	☐	☐	☐
Eye/hand coordination	☐	☐	☐	☒
Speaking	☐	☐	☐	☒
Hearing	☐	☐	☐	☒
Seeing (with correction)	☐	☐	☐	☒
Close vision	☐	☐	☐	☒
Distance vision - ability to see objects clearly from a distance, usually from 20 feet or more.	☐	☒	☐	☐
Color vision/perception - ability to distinguish colors.	☐	☐	☒	☐
Peripheral vision - what is seen on the side by the eye when looking straight ahead.	☐	☒	☐	☐
Depth perception - ability to judge the distance of objects and the spatial relationship of objects at different distances.	☐	☒	☐	☐

Position Description Team Members	<i>Provide a list of SMEs who helped develop the position description. Include name and work area.</i>
Preston Elliott	TDOT Deputy Commissioner, Chief of Planning
Julie J. Carmean	TDOT, Strategic Planning, Research, and Innovation Director
Ron Crew	RIC
Amy Neidringhaus	RIC
David Douglas	RIC
Lauren LeJeune	RIC