

**Department of Veterans Affairs
Charter of the
Rehabilitation Research and Development Service
Scientific Merit Review Board**

1. Committee's Official Designation. Rehabilitation Research and Development Service Scientific Merit Review Board.

2. Authority. The Rehabilitation Research and Development Service Scientific Merit Review Board (Board) is established by directive of the Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and operates under the provisions of the Federal Advisory Committee Act, as amended, 5 U.S.C. Ch 10.

3. Objectives and Scope of Activities. The objective of the Board is to provide for the fair and equitable selection of the most meritorious research projects for support by VA research funds and to offer advice for research program officials on program priorities and policies. The ultimate objective of the Board is to ensure through recommendations that the VA Office of Research and Development's (ORD) Rehabilitation Research program promotes functional independence and improves the quality of life for impaired and disabled Veterans. The Board does not consider grants, contracts or other forms of extramural research.

4. Description of Duties. The Board evaluates and advises the Deputy Chief Research and Development Officer (DCRADO) for Investigators, Scientific Review, and Management (ISRM) and the CRADO on strategies, goals and direction to support emerging issues and topics in Veteran health care through research and the scientific and technical merit, mission relevance and protection of human and animal subjects of rehabilitation research proposals.

The Board will, as needed: (1) review rehabilitation research proposals administered locally by VA facilities for scientific and technical merit; (2) prepare summary recommendations on all proposals based upon independent review, Board discussions, and site visits when necessary, which are used to convey group consensus to the DCRADO for ISRM; and (3) advise the CRADO for ISRM regarding the status of rehabilitation research as applicable to the Board members' areas of expertise.

5. Official to Whom the Board Reports. The Board reports to the Deputy CRADO for ISRM.

6. Support. Support for the Board is provided by ORD, Veterans Health Administration, VA.

7. Estimated Annual Operating Costs and Staff Years. The estimated annual cost for operating the Board is approximately \$1.25 million and 7.8 staff years. All members receive travel expenses and a per diem allowance in accordance with the Federal

Travel Regulation for any travel made in connection with their duties as members of the Board.

8. Designated Federal Officer. The Designated Federal Officer (DFO), a full-time VA employee, will approve the schedule of Board and subcommittee meetings. The DFO, or a designee, will be present at all meetings and each meeting will be conducted in accordance with an agenda approved by the DFO. The DFO is authorized to adjourn any meeting when they determine it is in the public interest to do so.

9. Estimated Number and Frequency of Meetings. The Board is expected to meet up to twice annually.

10. Duration. The Board performs a continuing service unrestricted as to time except as periodic review of its functions shall indicate that it is no longer needed. The Board's continued operation is contingent upon renewal of this charter by appropriate action prior to its expiration.

11. Termination. Unless renewed by appropriate action prior to its expiration, the Board will terminate two years from the filing date below.

12. Membership and Designation. The Board is composed of members having training, subject matter expertise and scientific merit review experience in a variety of scientific, technical and medical disciplines including but not limited to aging, brain health and injury (e.g., traumatic brain injury, stroke, epilepsy), chronic medical conditions, sensory systems (e.g., hearing, vision, tinnitus, balance), behavioral health and social reintegration, musculoskeletal health and disorders, neurology (e.g., spinal cord injury, neurodegenerative diseases), prosthetics/orthotics, pain, regeneration, rehabilitation and biomedical engineering, and communication disorders (e.g., speech/language). The Board shall represent the required subject matter expertise and technical skills along with diversity in race/ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, disability, geographical and employment backgrounds, and Veterans of diverse eras and branches of service when possible. Members will serve 2- to 4-year staggered appointments. The Board will be composed of approximately 12 members (subcommittee chairs). Members may be Regular Government Employees or Special Government Employees.

13. Subcommittees. With the DFO's approval, the Board is authorized to create subcommittees to perform specific projects or assignments, as necessary, and consistent with its mission. The Board chair shall notify the DCRADO for ISRM, through the DFO, of the creation of any subcommittee, including its function, membership, and estimated duration. Subcommittees must report their recommendations and advice to the Board for deliberation. A subcommittee must not provide advice or work products directly to VA.

14. Recordkeeping. Records of the Board shall be handled in accordance with General Records Schedule 6.2. or other approved agency records disposition schedules. Those

