

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

1. Official Designation. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Rehabilitation Research and Development Service Scientific Merit Review Board.

2. Authority. The Board is established by directive of the Secretary of VA and operates under the provisions of the Federal Advisory Committee Act, as amended, title 5, United States Code (U.S.C.), App. 2.

3. Objectives and Scope of Activity. 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 that the VA Rehabilitation Research and Development program promotes functional independence and improves the quality of life for impaired and disabled Veterans.

Board members advise the Director, Rehabilitation Research and Development Service and the Chief Research and Development Officer on the scientific and technical merit, the mission relevance and the protection of human and animal subjects of Rehabilitation Research and Development proposals. The Board does not consider grants, contracts or other forms of extramural research.

4. Description of Duties. The Board members and its subcommittees will, as needed: (1) review rehabilitation research and development 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, where necessary, which are used to convey group consensus to the Director of the Rehabilitation Research and Development Service and (3) advise the Director of the Rehabilitation Research and Development Service regarding the status of rehabilitation research and development as applicable to the Board members' areas of expertise.

5. Official to Whom the Board Reports. The Board reports to the Director, Rehabilitation Research and Development Service.

6. Office Responsible for Providing Necessary Support for the Board. Support for the Board is provided by the Office of Research and Development, Veterans Health Administration, Department of Veterans Affairs.

7. Estimated Annual Operating Costs in Dollars and Staff-Years. The estimated annual cost for operating the Board is approximately \$1,200,000 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.

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8. Designation Federal Officer. The Designated Federal Officer (DFO), a full-time VA employee, will approve the schedule of Board 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 Date. Unless renewed by appropriate action prior to its expiration, the Board will terminate 2 years from the date this charter is signed.


12. Membership and Designation. The Board is composed of members having training and expertise in a variety of scientific, technical and medical disciplines, including but not limited to aging; brain injury (e.g., traumatic brain injury, stroke, epilepsy); chronic conditions; hearing; mental health; musculoskeletal disorders; neurology (e.g., spinal cord injury, degenerative); prosthetics/orthotics; regeneration; rehabilitation and biomedical engineering; reintegration; speech/language; and vision. The Board shall represent the required technical skills along with diversity in race/ethnicity, gender, religion, disability, geographical background 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 establish subcommittees to perform specific projects or assignments as necessary and consistent with its mission. The Board chair shall notify the Director, Rehabilitation Research and Development Service, through the DFO, of the establishment of any subcommittee, including its function, membership and estimated duration. Subcommittees must report their recommendations and advice to the full committee for deliberation by the Board. 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 records shall be available for public inspection and copying, subject to the Freedom of Information Act, 5 U.S.C. § 552.

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15. Filing date.

Approved. 
Deris McDonough
Secretary of Veterans Affairs

4/19/22
Date