

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
CHARTER OF THE
JOINT BIOMEDICAL LABORATORY RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT AND
CLINICAL SCIENCE RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES SCIENTIFIC
MERIT REVIEW BOARD

1. OFFICIAL DESIGNATION: Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Joint Biomedical Laboratory Research and Development and Clinical Science Research and Development Services 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, 5 U.S.C. App. 2.

3. OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE OF ACTIVITY: The objective of the Board is to provide expert review of the scientific quality, budget, safety, and mission-relevance of investigator-initiated research proposals submitted for VA merit review consideration, and to offer advice for research program officials on program priorities and policies. The proposals to be reviewed may address research questions within the general area of biomedical and behavioral research or clinical science research. The Board specifically advises the Directors of the Biomedical Laboratory Research and Development Service and the Clinical Science Research and Development Service and the Chief Research and Development Officer on the administration of its intramural program. The Board does not consider grants, contracts, or other forms of extramural research.

4. DESCRIPTION OF DUTIES: The Board advises the Directors, Biomedical Laboratory Research and Development Service and Clinical Science Research and Development Service on the scientific merit and mission relevance of proposals for research funding developed by investigators in or associated with VA medical facilities (medical centers and independent outpatient clinics). The Board identifies human subject, animal subject, and biohazard concerns that must be addressed, and it recommends the level of budgetary support and duration of support for those proposals with sufficient merit for funding.

5. OFFICIAL TO WHOM THE BOARD REPORTS: The Board reports to the Directors, Biomedical Laboratory Research and Development Service and Clinical Science 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 \$1,650,000 and 4.9 staff years.

All members will 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 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 he or she determines 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 the expiration, the Board will terminate 2 years from the date below.

12. MEMBERSHIP AND DESIGNATION: The Board is composed of both VA and non-VA scientists who are nationally and internationally recognized as experts in their respective fields, and are qualified to evaluate the scientific, technical, and medical aspects of the proposals within their purview of the Board. Members must reflect the broad-based scientific expertise required to competently review the research proposals received in basic, pre-clinical biomedical and behavioral research, and clinical research of disorders and diseases of important to the health of Veterans, including epidemiology and single-site or small multi-site clinical trials. Board membership shall represent, to the extent possible, diversity in race/ethnicity, gender, and geographical background. Members shall serve 2- to 4-year staggered appointments. The number of Board members shall be determined by the number and nature of the proposals that are to be evaluated, which is estimated to require 200 members. Some members will be Regular Government Employees, but the majority of the Board's membership will be Special Government Employees.

13. SUBCOMMITTEES: The Board is authorized to establish subcommittees, with the DFO's approval, to perform specific projects or assignments as necessary and consistent with its mission. The Board chair shall notify the Directors, Biomedical Laboratory Research and Development Service and Clinical Science Research and Development Service, through the DFO, of the establishment of any subcommittee, including its function, membership, and estimated duration. Subcommittees will report back to the Board.

14. RECORDKEEPING: Records of the Board shall be handled in accordance with General Records Schedule 26 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.

15. DATE CHARTER IS FILED:

Approved: 
John R. Gingrich
Chief of Staff

Date: 7/12/12