

**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. 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 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 objectives of the Board are to provide expert review of the scientific quality, budget, safety and mission-relevance of investigator-initiated research applications submitted for VA merit review consideration and to offer advice for research program officials on program priorities and policies. The applications to be reviewed may address research questions within the general area of biomedical and behavioral research or clinical science research. 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 applications 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 applications 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 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 \$1,750,000 and 4.9 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 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 this charter is signed.


12. Membership and Designation. Board members will be selected based on professional achievement and expertise in the research subject areas needed. The Board shall represent, to the extent possible, diversity in race/ethnicity, gender, geographical background and Veterans of diverse eras and branches of service. Members shall serve 2- to 4-year staggered appointments and may, at times, serve a 1-year renewed appointment, contingent upon renewal of the Board's charter. The Board will be composed of approximately 32 members (subcommittee chairs). Some members will be Regular Government Employees, but the majority of the Board's membership will be 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 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 must report their recommendations and advice to 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. 
Denis McDonough
Secretary of Veterans Affairs

4/19/22
Date