



DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

Rehabilitation Research, Development and Translation Scientific Merit Review Board

AGENCY: Department of Veterans Affairs.

ACTION: Notice of Intent to File.

SUMMARY: We are giving notice that the Secretary of Veterans Affairs intends to renew the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Rehabilitation Research, Development and Translation Scientific Merit Review Board (formerly Rehabilitation Research and Development Service Scientific Merit Review Board) for a 2-year period. The Secretary has determined that the Committee is necessary and in the public interest.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Jeffrey Moragne, Committee Management Office, Department of Veterans Affairs, Advisory Committee Management Office (00AC), 811 Vermont Avenue, 4th floor, NW, Washington, DC 20420; telephone (202) 714-1578; or email at Jeffrey.Moragne@va.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Pursuant to the Federal Advisory Committee ACT, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs intends to renew the Rehabilitation Research, Development and Translation Scientific Merit Review Board (RRDT or Board) for two (2) years from the filing date of the charter's renewal. The purpose of RRDT 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 program promotes functional independence and improves the quality of life for impaired and disabled Veterans.

Also in pursuant to 41 C.F.R § 102-3.65, the Department of Veterans Affairs provides this written notice determination stating that the Board is in the public interest and found to be in accordance with the Federal Advisory Community Act (FACA), the FACA 2025 Final Rule, and

current to the U.S. General Services Administration, Committee Management Secretariat guidance. The following factors below provide an overview of the Committee's operations and public interest intent.

Annual Budget – The overall operating costs for Joint Brain Behavioral is \$1,500,000. 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. The expected costs are broken into:

- (i) Federal personnel (based on full-time equivalent (FTE) usage basis) is 7.8 with other Federal internal costs being \$1,340,000.
- (ii) Proposed payments to Non-Federal Members are \$160,000. There are 12 members on the Parent Committee and 12 Subcommittees with more than 600 consultant members who do not serve on the Parent Committee. Subcommittee members are recruited based on the number and the research focus of the applications received. Non-Federal members receive up to \$300/day of service.
- (iii) Reimbursable costs are \$0.00 non-applicable for the Board.

This Committee does not have any dollar value of grants expected for the fiscal year.

Membership Selection – 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). RRDT represents the required subject matter expertise and technical skills along with applicable academia position and Veterans of different eras and branches of military service if possible.

Existing Federal Advisory Committees - The following list of 27 VA advisory committees includes 18 that are statute (with an asterisk *) and 9 non-statutory committees.

- 1) VA National Academic Affiliations Council
- *2) Advisory Committee on Cemeteries and Memorials
- 3) Cooperative Studies Scientific Evaluation Committee
- *4) Advisory Committee on Disability Compensation
- *5) Veterans' Advisory Committee on Education
- *6) Veterans' Advisory Committee on Environmental Hazards (Administratively Inactive)
- *7) Advisory Committee on Former Prisoners of War
- *8) Geriatrics and Gerontology Advisory Committee
- *9) Research Advisory Committee on Gulf War Veterans' Illnesses
- 10) Health Systems Research Service Merit Review Board
- *11) Advisory Committee on Homeless Veterans
- 12) Joint Biomedical Laboratory Research and Development and Clinical Science Research and Development Services Scientific Merit Review Board
- *13) Advisory Committee on Minority Veterans
- 14) National Research Advisory Council
- *15) Advisory Committee on U.S. Outlying Areas and Freely Associated States
- *16) Advisory Committee on Prosthetics and Special Disabilities Programs
- *17) Advisory Committee on the Readjustment of Veterans
- *18) Veterans' Advisory Committee on Rehabilitation
- 19) Rehabilitation Research and Development Service Scientific Merit Review Board
- 20) Veterans' Rural Health Advisory Committee
- *21) Special Medical Advisory Group

*22) Advisory Committee on Structural Safety of Department of Veterans Affairs

Facilities

*23) Advisory Committee on Tribal and Indian Affairs

24) Veterans' Family, Caregiver, and Survivor Advisory Committee

*25) Veterans and Community Oversight and Engagement Board

26) Department of Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service National Advisory Committee

*27) Advisory Committee on Women Veterans

Justification - The review of rehabilitation research proposals requires highly specialized subject matter expertise and experience. Ensuring broad and appropriate expertise on the RRDT is obtained by recruiting experts both from within and outside of the Federal Government.

Summary of Previous Committee Accomplishments – This FACA Scientific Merit Review Board (SMRB) reviews and evaluates approximately 450 rehabilitation research proposals per year through its subcommittees. These evaluations have assisted VA Office of Research Development (ORD) in selecting the most meritorious research projects that will ultimately lead to improvements in Veteran health and healthcare, quality of life and participation in their lives and community. VA ORD funds approximately 20% of the proposals it receives. This SMRB needs to continue its activities so VA ORD can continue to benefit from expert evaluations when making funding decisions.

Why Committee is Essential – Rehabilitation Research, Development and Translation Scientific Merit Review Board provides advice on the fair and equitable selection of the most meritorious research projects for support by VA research funds; advice for research program officials on program priorities and policies; and ensures that the VA Rehabilitation Research and Development program promoted functional independence and improved the quality of life for impaired and disabled Veterans. Peer review of research proposals by external subject matter experts (SMEs) is a critical element of the VA's Research program. Organizing VA's Scientific Merit Review Boards under Federal Advisory Committee Act committees gives us the legal

authority to recruit external SMEs. VA research is a statutory mandate under 38 U.S. Code § 7303, Public Law No. 117-328. VA Research priorities are further mandated by the Hannon Act (traumatic brain injury), the PACT Act (military toxic exposures and Gulf War Illness), the CARA act (Pain and opioid treatment), the Cleland Dole Act (Precision Oncology), and the MISSION and Elizabeth Dole Acts (community care). There is no other mechanism for VA to get this expert advice.

In conclusion, this Notice of Intent states that this renewing Board is in the public interest, essential to the conduct of agency business and that the information provided is not available through any other advisory committee or source within the Federal Government.

Dated: March 16, 2026

LaTonya L. Small
Federal Advisory Committee Management Officer
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