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, 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 $1.4M and 7.9 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.

8. DESIGNATED FEDERAL OFFICER (DFO): The 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 its expiration, the Board will terminate 2 years from the date below.

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, to the extent possible, diversity in race/ethnicity, gender, and geographical background. Members will serve 2- to 4-year staggered appointments. The Board will be composed of approximately 125 members. Several members may 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 Director, Rehabilitation 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: _____ Date: 5/9/2014

Eric K. Shinseki
Secretary of Veterans Affairs