

**Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Health Administration
Office of Research and Development**

Field Research Advisory Committee

Operating Procedures

Section I: Purpose

The purpose of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Field Research Advisory Committee (FRAC) is to promote communication between ORD and investigators in the field, provide input on issues relevant to VA research including current operations, and participate in strategic planning. The purview of FRAC will include all research sponsored and/or conducted by the Veterans Health Administration (VHA), Office of Research and Development (ORD).

Section II: Authority

The Deputy Under Secretary for Health has determined that the establishment of the FRAC is in the best interest of the VA research program. The FRAC will continue until such time as the Deputy Under Secretary for Health or the Under Secretary for Health determine that it is no longer necessary and/or no longer meets its intended purpose.

Section III: Membership

Membership of the FRAC will be comprised of both VA Central Office (VACO) and field staff. VACO members are appointed by virtue of their position. Field members are elected by the constituency they represent.

Members from VACO will include the Chief Research and Development Officer (CRADO), Deputy CRADO, and the directors of the four research services within the ORD: Biomedical Laboratory Research and Development Service (BLR&D), Clinical Science Research and Development Service (CSR&D), Health Services Research and Development Service (HSR&D), and Rehabilitation Research and Development Service (RR&D). Individuals officially appointed as “acting” in one of these positions will serve on the FRAC if appointed for 30 days or longer.

Members from the field will include five Associate Chiefs of Staff for Research and Development (ACOS/R&D), one director of an HSR&D-funded Center of Excellence (COE), one director of an RR&D-funded COE, one chairman of a Cooperative Study funded by CSR&D, and one non-clinician Ph.D. scientist.

Section IV: Field Member Election and Appointment

The ACOS/R&D representatives will be elected from among all ACOS/R&D within their respective region. For purposes of FRAC representation, the regions are broken down by Veterans Integrated Service Networks (VISNs) as follows:

Northeastern Region: VISNs 1, 2, and 3

Mid-Atlantic Region: VISNs 4, 5, 6, 9, and 10

Southern Region: VISNs 7, 8, 16, and 17

Midwestern Region: VISNs 11, 12, 15, 19, and 23

Western Region: VISNs 18, 20, 21, and 22

The HSR&D COE Director will be elected from among all directors of COEs funded by HSR&D.

The RR&D COE Director will be elected from among all directors of COEs funded by RR&D.

The Cooperative Study Chairman will be elected from among all chairmen of studies funded by the Cooperative Studies Program (CSP) within CSR&D.

The non-clinician Ph.D. scientist will be elected from among all Research Career Scientists (RCS) and Senior RCS funded by BLR&D, CSR&D, HSR&D, and RR&D.

FRAC members elected from the field are appointed by the Under Secretary for Health for overlapping three-year terms. Initially, field members will be appointed for two, three, or four year terms.

In the election of new members, close attention will be given to equitable geographic distribution and to ethnic and gender representation. Every effort will be made to ensure that no single VA medical center is represented by more than one field member.

Membership includes the responsibility to attend and participate in FRAC meetings to the fullest extent possible. Alternate members will not be permitted to represent those individuals appointed except under special circumstances. Participation in meetings by telephone will be permitted when members are unable to participate personally.

When a vacancy in membership occurs, a successor will be elected by the constituency the vacant position will represent. Whenever possible, a vacancy will be filled within 60 days of its occurrence.

Section V: Meeting Procedures

A. Number and Frequency of Meetings: Meetings will be held quarterly on a schedule agreed upon by FRAC members.

B. Quorum: The FRAC is a consensus driven discussion/advisory body. Although no quorum is necessary to conduct a meeting, every effort will be made to ensure that a majority of members are present at FRAC meetings.

C. Agenda: The FRAC Committee Manager, in consultation with the Chairman and with input from FRAC members, will compile the agenda for all meetings. The ORD will distribute the agenda to the members prior to each meeting along with any background information deemed necessary or specifically requested by the members. Any member of the FRAC may submit items for the agenda to the Committee Manager and/or the Chairman. Non-members who wish to suggest topics may do so through their FRAC representative.

D. Minutes and Records: The FRAC Committee Manager will prepare summary minutes of each meeting and will distribute copies to each FRAC member. Minutes of meetings will be available to the VA research community on the VA research website. The minutes will include a record of the persons present (including the names of FRAC members, names of supporting staff, and the name of any other individual by whom written or oral presentations were made) together with a description of the matters discussed and conclusions reached, and copies of all reports received, issued or approved by the FRAC.

Section VI: Voting

As a consensus-driven body, the FRAC normally will not engage in formal motions and voting. Any votes taken will normally be done only for the purpose of reaching consensus.

Section VII: Chairperson

The CRADO will serve as FRAC Chairperson. If the CRADO is unavailable or unable to preside over a scheduled meeting, he/she will appoint a field member of the FRAC to function as Acting Chairperson. This provision also applies to periods within a meeting when the Chairperson cannot be present.

Section VIII: Subcommittees

The FRAC may establish subcommittees to study and/or evaluate particular aspects of the VA research program. Subcommittees will primarily be ad hoc and perform on a time-limited basis. Ad hoc subcommittees may include subject matter experts who are not appointed members of the FRAC.

Standing subcommittees may also be appointed to advise the FRAC on ongoing matters. Only appointed FRAC members may serve on standing subcommittees.

The Chairperson will appoint all subcommittee members. FRAC members may recommend specific individuals to serve on subcommittees.

Section IX: Office Responsible for Providing the Necessary Support to the Committee

The ORD is responsible for providing necessary support for the FRAC. Such support will include provision of meeting space and travel funds, preparation of agendas and supporting materials, and preparation of minutes.

Normally travel funds will be provided only to appointed FRAC members. Subject matter experts appointed to ad hoc subcommittees will not attend meetings except under special circumstances.

Approved by the Field Research Advisory Committee, July 9, 2004