

## CHARTER

# SCIENTIFIC PROJECTS COMMITTEE

April 4, 2011

### 1. Purpose

The purpose of the Scientific Projects Committee (SPC) is to aid VA investigators in maximizing the quality of their research applications; facilitate the grant submission process; facilitate the passage of research projects through the required scientific review processes; and assure that administrative processes established by the VA Research Office are adequately designed and executed to meet these objectives.

### 2. Authority

Authority is vested in the SPC through the Research and Development (R&D) Committee. The SPC on a routine basis reports to the R&D Committee, or more often as requested by the Chair of the R&D Committee, to:

- a. Make recommendations regarding specific research projects.
- b. Keep the R&D Committee informed on research areas within the SPC domain and make recommendations for changes in policy and process.
- c. At least annually, provide a summary report.

### 3. Membership

- a. The SPC membership consists of VA investigators, funded or unfunded, and other staff deemed necessary by the Committee and its Chair to meet Committee responsibilities for study and proposal reviews. The SPC must include:
  - i. Both clinical and basic scientists representing a broad base of scientific areas under study in NF/SG VHS.
  - ii. Representatives from each Research Center.
- b. The Chair or her/his designees, with the approval of a majority vote of the SPC, will recruit new Committee members.
- c. Members serve three-year terms but may be reappointed by the Chair, with the approval of the membership, to serve two or more consecutive terms.
- d. The Chair of the SPC is appointed by the R&D Committee. S/he serves a three-year term but may be reappointed by the R&D Committee to serve two or more consecutive terms. The Chair may designate an SPC member to serve temporarily as Chair in case of absence.
- e. Ad hoc members may be appointed temporarily by the Chair of the SPC as needed to review and report on selected proposals and may vote.
- f. The Associate Chief of Staff for Research (ACOS-R) and other research office staff designated by the ACOS-R are non-voting, ex-officio members of the SPC.

#### **4. Meetings**

- a. Meetings are held at least monthly, at a stated date and time, as needed to coordinate the study and grant proposal review process including the R&D Committee review and approval.
- b. Research Office staff, appointed by the ACOS-R or her/his designate, prepares an agenda in collaboration with the SPC Chair.
- c. Quorum. A quorum consists of fifty percent of the SPC membership plus one. The SPC secretary, appointed by the ACOS-R or her/his designate, will document attendance. A quorum will be required in matters of policy and process. Votes on scientific reviews will not require a quorum.
- d. Conflict of interest. SPC members with a personal financial interest and/or listed on the project/issue under consideration must recuse themselves from the vote.
- e. Guests. Meetings of the Committee are open and interested non-members may attend and contribute to Committee discussions, but may not vote and are required to leave the room during a vote.
- f. Minutes of each meeting are prepared by the SPC secretary; reviewed, edited and signed by the Chair; this initial set of minutes may go to the R&D Committee with the Chair's signature; at the next SPC meeting the members will review the minutes, vote on approval and then the final copy is submitted to the Chair of the R&D Committee and the ACOS-R for final approval.

#### **5. Administrative Reviews**

An administrative review will be performed by the Research Service Office on all grant proposals, career science applications, and other proposals and applications that are scientifically reviewed by the SPC. At a minimum the administrative review will address budget development and administration, adequacy of space and other resources, and other issues related to the administration of the grant or application.

#### **6. Scientific Review**

- a. New proposals to be submitted to VA Office of Research and Development (VA ORD), VA Office of Academic Affairs (VA OAA) and other VA and VHA offices. All new proposals to be submitted to VA ORD, and other VA offices, will be scientifically reviewed by the SPC. The purpose of this review is to optimize the quality of the research; maximize the potential for funding; and aid the investigator in the submission process. There are two routes that may be followed for new proposals:
  - i. The first route is a study section style review to be performed by a locally recruited expert in the field, or if no suitable local experts are available, an expert recruited from elsewhere, with the advice and consent of the principal investigator. This review is expected to fully emulate a study section review in its thoroughness and rigor and to employ standard VA study section format.
  - ii. The second route for new VA proposals/studies is performed by the Research Centers. The SPC may delegate full review responsibility to the Research Centers provided that these Centers provide documentation to the SPC of a review process that meets or exceeds the standards of the SPC review process. The SPC will review Center review processes annually. Centers will have the option of requesting that the SPC do the review of selected projects.

- b. Resubmissions to VA ORD or other VACO programs. Resubmissions may use either route and the proposal will be evaluated by the original reviewers when feasible, or by additional reviewers as deemed necessary. They will provide advice regarding response to critique.
- c. Proposals to be submitted to or involving extramural funding agencies (e.g., National Institutes of Health, pharmaceutical companies). Principal investigators may request a scientific review prior to submission and the SPC will respond to all requests to the extent that it has the necessary resources. The SPC may develop scientific review processes that best fit the needs of the proposal/study.
- d. Expedited review. In circumstances in which the funding of a research proposal (e.g., due to a short deadline) might be jeopardized by delay until the next SPC meeting, an expedited review may be requested and submitted to the SPC. Proposals of this type will be subjected to an abbreviated review process that includes the administrative review. The votes of SPC members on expedited reviews may be obtained via a tele-conference call.
- e. Applications for Career Research Scientist Awards and Centralized Positions of Research Scientists. The SPC reviews all Research Career Scientist Award applications, and Centralized Positions of Research Scientist applications at least once a year. Additional meetings may be held when needed. Additional reviewers may be invited, as needed, to supplement the Committee's review.
- f. Other proposals. The SPC may develop review processes and require review of proposals not covered in sections 6 a-d, subject to approval of these review processes by the R&D Committee.
- g. Proposal submission process. The SPC will work with Research Office staff to assure that proposals are submitted in a timely fashion to allow adequate scientific and administrative review to meet Central Office and local submission deadlines.
- h. Proposals deemed approved/ready for submission will be recommended to the R&D Committee for approval, without qualifications. A proposal may be conditionally approved, in which case approval may subsequently be granted by the Chair, contingent upon documentation of changes specifically addressing the issues in question and/or provision of missing documents. Investigators will be provided all scientific review documents.

## **7. Relationship to Research Office**

The SPC acts as an advisory board to the Grants Administration Core (GAC) of the Research Office on issues related to the SPC charge.

## **8. Charter Approval and Revision**

- a. Approval. This Charter must be approved by a majority of the members of the R&D Committee to become active.
- b. Revision. Recommendations for revisions to this Charter may be forwarded to the R&D Committee following approval by a majority of the members of the SPC. These revisions, as well as revisions initiated in the R&D Committee, must be approved by a majority of the members of the R&D Committee to become active.
- c. This Charter and any SOP's developed for the purposes of this Committee will be reviewed by the Scientific Projects Committee Chair and members annually and revised as needed.

**Initial Approval:** October 6, 2008

**Revision:** February 1, 2010

**Revision:** April 4, 2011