

Research Nova Scotia

Research Advisory Committee (RAC) - Terms of Reference

1. Mandate

The Research Advisory Committee (RAC) is an advisory committee to Research Nova Scotia. The RAC is a forum for parties to provide guidance to Research Nova Scotia's direction and organizational planning, and to help ensure the research ecosystem and its related partners and sectors have opportunity for alignment with provincial research priorities.

The RAC is responsible for providing advice and recommendations on:

- strategy development;
- program development;
- funding of research, including alignment of match funding requests to provincial research priorities, and alternate/additional sources of funding from within departments and partners.

Advice provided by the RAC shall be considered by the CEO and, when appropriate, by the Board of Directors. The RAC provides advice to the CEO on funding and programming decisions for Research Nova Scotia.

2. Roles and responsibilities

Strategy development

The RAC provides advice and guidance on Research Nova Scotia's strategic direction, including partner engagement, refinement and definition of missions, and new sources of funding. Committee members commit to sharing priorities and strategic plans from their respective institutions, organizations or departments as a means to identify areas for collaboration and opportunities for alignment.

Program development

The RAC provides advice on programming developed by Research Nova Scotia to implement its mandate. This includes advice on the administration of existing programs and opportunities for development of new programs and research initiatives.

Research funding

The RAC provides advice on requests to RNS for matched funding from recipients of peer-reviewed awards such as the Canada Foundation for Innovation. Members shall consider each project's alignment to provincial research priorities, and alignment to Research Nova Scotia's strategy.

The RAC is a forum to present research ideas such that alternative or supplemental funding can be discussed.

3. Membership

Membership consists of representatives from Research Nova Scotia's key stakeholder groups:

- post-secondary institutions and health research organizations
- government departments
- partner organizations

Each institution, organization and department is invited to appoint one senior-level representative to the RAC. All members are *ex officio*: appointed by virtue of their position within their respective organizations; should a member leave their position, the institution, organization or department will appoint a new representative in their place.

To the extent possible, institutions are encouraged to maintain continuity in the discussion process through consistency in representation. There may be occasions in which subject matter expertise beyond that of the representative is required to resolve discussions appropriately and efficiently. Members may request guest representatives attend individual meetings, subject to written approval in advance by the Chair.

Where multiple government departments report into one deputy minister, the deputy minister may appoint a representative for each discrete department.

Research Nova Scotia's Chief Operating Officer and the Director of Strategy are staff representatives on the committee.

The Chair of the Research Advisory Committee is Research Nova Scotia's Chief Executive Officer. The Chair may appoint an acting chair or vice-chair, should the need arise, from among members of the committee.

4. Meetings

The RAC meets as required, but no less than three times per year. Meetings are called at the request of the Chair or any six members of the Committee.

Meetings take place in person, with allowance for remote (video or teleconference) options when necessary for members unable to travel. Members are encouraged to make every effort to attend in person to promote robust discussion.

Meetings generally take place at the Research Nova Scotia's office, but effort will be made to also rotate meeting locations to RAC members' home institutions around Nova Scotia.

The Chair may propose teleconference/videoconference meetings, or advice-via-email, in between scheduled RAC meetings.

Committee members are compensated for travel expenditures as per Research Nova Scotia's financial and travel policies.

5. Procedures

As an advisory committee, there is no minimum attendance required for quorum. Should the attendance at any meeting be low, the Chair may reschedule the meeting to ensure adequate discussion and advice.

Agenda items shall be circulated as far in advance as practicable to allow members to prepare views and to request additional attendance as required.

Given the RAC's advisory nature, there are no votes or motions. No whole-of-committee recommendations are expected, but individual or groups of members may record views or recommendation for attribution in the minutes. From time to time, the Chair may poll the members to determine the degree of consensus around the advice being provided on agenda items.

Abstentions from discussions will be recorded.

Meeting minutes will document the discussion and any recommendations from each meeting. Minutes will be sent to all Committee members on a timely basis.

6. Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality

The RAC follows the RNS Board definition of Conflict: a real, potential or perceived conflict of interest of a Committee member where financial, professional or personal considerations may compromise, or have the appearance of compromising, the judgement of a Committee member in carrying out his or her duties.

Direct conflict arises in the discussion around specific research projects seeking funding.

Because all members of the advisory committee have an interest in the conduct of RNS and the use of its funds, there is an unavoidable but indirect conflict when discussing the strategy and programs. In this instance, individuals are expected to represent the views of their home organization, and this is not considered a conflict of interest.

All documents and information provided to the RAC is to be held in strict confidence at all times and may only be used for the purpose for which it was distributed.

All RAC members are required to sign the RNS Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality Agreement.