



The Association  
of Biomolecular  
Resource Facilities

Research • Technology • Communication • Education

## **ABRF Research Groups' Handbook**

*Revised: March 2021*

# ABRF RESEARCH GROUP HANDBOOK

## A Description of the Purpose and Responsibilities of the Research Groups and the Interpretation of their Experimental Results

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## INTRODUCTION

The Association of Biomolecular Resource Facilities (ABRF) is a professional society composed of members from laboratories engaged in providing analytical, synthetic, and other capabilities to a multitude of collaborating scientists. The efforts of the ABRF Research Groups (RGs) represent a significant asset to the scientific community and are the distinguishing feature that sets ABRF apart from other professional scientific societies.

The goal of an RG study may be to evaluate emerging strategies, provide benchmarks for routine analytical capabilities, or to compare different approaches to analytical challenges. It is the responsibility of each RG to organize and provide opportunities for all eligible ABRF members and interested scientists to participate in research activities that are (or eventually will be) useful to a broad cross-section of the membership and the greater scientific community as a whole. RGs thus may attempt to challenge the ingenuity or technical capabilities of study participants or may provide what would be considered a “real” sample, similar to one which might routinely be submitted to a Resource Facility within the context of the prevailing technologies and methods of the time. Participation in an RG study should be a valuable experience and should enable participants to prepare more effectively for change in the analytical environment.

In addition, the research activities may provide an educational component to members, when the protocols of successful participants are shared (being careful to maintain anonymity unless the participant agrees to a release). In general, research activities should occur annually, however the complexity of the study may warrant an extended time frame. Studies **must** result in presentation of the data at the ABRF meeting, **can** be presented at other appropriate meetings and **should** be published in peer-reviewed literature.

It is a goal of the Executive Board to facilitate and enable the work of the RGs. The Executive Board thanks the volunteer members of the RGs for their time and energy. Assisting the members of the ABRF and the greater scientific community to increase the quality of their science is a goal shared by all of the volunteers who work for the ABRF.

## RESEARCH GROUP OPERATING GUIDELINES

This Handbook describes the practices common to Research Groups that have met these objectives consistently and in a timely manner. The Executive Board feels it is appropriate for Research Groups to review these Guidelines periodically, as a reminder of productive mechanisms for meeting this objective. However, Research Groups should interpret and use these Guidelines with some discretion and apply the Guidelines to the specific context of the individual Research Group and its objectives.

### A. PURPOSE of the RESEARCH GROUPS

The RGs were established by a resolution of the Executive Board "to provide mechanisms for the self-evaluation and improvement of procedural and operational accuracy, precision and efficiency in resource facilities and research laboratories"<sup>1</sup>, and to contribute to "the education of resource facility and research laboratory staff, users and administrators and interested members of the scientific community"<sup>2</sup>. Historically, RGs have met these objectives (i) by distributing or requesting test samples (hereinafter referred to as "study materials") for analysis or preparation by member laboratories and then evaluating the results obtained with these study materials, or (ii) by conducting detailed surveys about services provided by member laboratories. Because this approach has been very successful in the past, and still appears to be the most efficacious, it should be continued.

### B. PARTICIPATION

#### B.1 Participation in the Research Groups

All Members of the ABRF are eligible to serve in Research Groups. Group members should plan to serve for **three years, with an option to continue for another three years**. About 1/3 of the group generally retires after their commitments are met, including writing up for publication the results of the study(ies) in which they participated. Retiring members will be replaced by new members, who are nominated by group members and **approved by the Executive Board**. Groups are encouraged to plan the year so that all responsibilities of retiring members are completed by the annual ABRF meeting, and new members can be added at that time. Retiring Chairs may serve as *ad hoc* members to complete the preparation of manuscripts.

#### B.1.1 Selection of New Members

Often, recruitment of new RG members occurs during or shortly after the Annual Meeting. If at all possible, however, new members should be recruited one month before the end of retiring members' terms and meet with the RG at the Annual Meeting. **A curriculum vitae and statement of interest from the candidate is circulated amongst the group members and approved, then presented to the Executive Board for review and approval.** Research Groups should make every effort to maintain balance and diversity in experience, research interests, and

<sup>1</sup> Bylaws, Article I, Purpose, Section 1. B.

<sup>2</sup> Bylaws, Article I, Purpose, Section 1.C

geographical location. Excellence in written communication and data analysis skills should be included as competencies among the members.

### **Suggestions for selecting and nominating new RG candidates for EB approval:**

1) *RGs nominate and vet members internally.*

Identify potential candidates. The Chair has several means of doing this including:

- a) Ask EB for advice, or if you're unsure of potential concerns or conflicts.
- b) Advertise (e.g., web site, ABRF discussion forums, annual meeting, Email blast from ABRF).

2) *Candidates are then forwarded to the EB for approval via the EB liaison for each RG.*

a) *Submit the candidates CV/Biosketch along with a statement of purpose.*

All RG members must be active ABRF members with a current COI form on file (must be resubmitted annually). This form is located within the members' section of the ABRF web site.

#### *B.1.2 Ad hoc Members*

*Ad hoc* Members are individuals who may be added to the RG either to fulfill a specific purpose or to provide a specific skill set which is only needed temporarily by the RG or to serve as liaisons to facilitate communication between RGs. These liaisons are not expected to carry any part of the workload of the RG unless they volunteer to do so. **Nominations of *ad hoc* members who are not already members of another RG should be presented to the Executive Board for approval**, along with a statement regarding why they are needed and the term of their appointment. Retiring chairs are typical *ad hoc* members and serve to complete manuscripts.

#### *B.2 Participation of the Executive Board in the Research Groups*

A liaison from the Executive Board will be appointed for each RG. It is the responsibility of the liaison to inform the RG of actions taken by the Executive Board that may impact the group or its members, to regularly attend conference calls of the group, and to keep the Executive Board informed of the activities, progress and needs of the RG. The liaison also is the conduit for information which needs to be passed from the RG to the meeting organizers. Additionally, the liaison will serve as a consultant to the group when questions arise about ABRF policies. The liaison may actively participate in the studies of the group, if they so desire and if the group agrees. The liaison will generally serve as a resource for the RG, which may or may not include voting if agreed upon by the liaison and the RG.

#### *B.3 Participation in the Studies*

Participation in the studies conducted by the Research Groups is voluntary and open to all members of the scientific community, with a preference given to active ABRF members if study samples are in limited supply. See "Corporate Partner RG Study Participation Guidelines" and section E.5 of this document regarding fair use of study materials and results by vendor and manufacturer participants. No pressure to participate, nor coercion from the RG or any other arm of the ABRF, should be brought to bear on members other than invitation and general encouragement.

## C. DUTIES and RESPONSIBILITIES of INDIVIDUALS

### C.1 *Research Group Members*

Members of each RG are expected to contribute to the studies and to expend a reasonable and timely effort in carrying out the mission of the RG. Duties should be divided as equally as possible among the individual members. Members are expected to contribute both intellectually and technically. Members who discover they unexpectedly have other commitments which prevent them from taking an active part in the study must communicate this at the earliest opportunity in fairness to their colleagues. In this situation, the group may ask that individual to stand down and a replacement may be appointed. Members should not expect to be reimbursed as a matter of course for expenses incurred in the performance of their responsibilities as an RG member. If, in the course of operation it is decided that the budget will permit and the contribution is deserving, an individual may be reimbursed partially or completely for expenses incurred in the service of the Research Group or the ABRF. This must be agreed to beforehand by the RG and, when the amount is more than budgeted for the RG, the Executive Board. Those who are unwilling or unable to participate under these circumstances should respectfully decline membership.

### C.2 *Conflict of Interest*

All members on a yearly basis (or prior to beginning service in a Research Group) must complete a Conflict of Interest form (obtained through the ABRF website). Members of the ABRF with conflicts of interest may, in some cases, serve on RGs if those conflicts are fully disclosed to the President and the Executive Board approves their candidacy. Members should not expect or accept any personal gain over and above that which would generally come to all RG members as a consequence of working for the common good of the RG and the ABRF. ***No member should endorse any product, instrument, or commercial concern that can be construed to be involved in the RG's area of research generally or which played some part in the RG's study.*** A member may feel free to express his or her professional opinion providing it is done as an individual and not as a representative of the ABRF.

### C.3 *Chair of Research Group*

The Chair of a Research Group should be selected by consensus of the members in consultation with their Executive Board liaison. The method of achieving this consensus, whether by vote or discussion, is the prerogative of the individual RG. The Chair is responsible for the organization, analysis, and completion of the study, including publication of study results. The group may wish to operate with a Chair and an assistant or *ad hoc* Chair, with the Chair having the overall responsibility for ensuring that the key RG obligations are met. The Chair (or designee) keeps the ABRF staff updated as to the membership of the group and ensures that the data on the ABRF web site is current. The Chair is also responsible for submitting

candidates for RG membership, with the goal of achieving a balance in experience, rank, and expertise in the composition of the committee. The Chair submits study designs, budgets, and manuscripts to the Executive Board in a timely manner. The Chair additionally communicates with the meeting organizers and submits written updates on committee activities in a format that can be published in the Fall and in late Spring/early Summer.

The Chair provides RG members with a tentative agenda for upcoming meetings and conference calls, however s/he is not expected or required to bear an inordinate share of the work and should designate a secretary or rotation through all members in order to record and distribute minutes of the conference calls.

#### *C.4 Executive Board Members*

It is a goal of the Executive Board to facilitate and enable the work of the Research Groups. This is accomplished through the EB liaison that is appointed by the EB for each RG. The role of the EB liaison is primarily to ensure continuity of the goals and performance of the RG with the rest of the ABRF and to provide a line of communication between the Executive Board and RG regarding wishes, concerns, and actions from both sides. The EB liaison thus is an active member of each RG and participates in all meetings and may become involved in the study at the EB liaison's discretion.

If an Executive Board liaison becomes non-responsive to the needs of the RG, then the chair of the RG should contact the president of the ABRF, who will resolve the matter.

##### *C.4.1 Specific Duties of the Executive Board with Regard to the Research Groups*

- 1) It is the responsibility of the Executive Board to approve the establishment of new Research Groups or to redirect the focus of, merge, or bring to an end the activities of Research Groups in order to fulfill the mission of the ABRF and to meet the needs of the ABRF membership.
- 2) The Executive Board will review and approve mission statements for Research Groups.
- 3) The Executive Board will approve and occasionally suggest new members for Research Groups.
- 4) The Executive Board will review and approve study design. The Executive Board reserves the right to modify the design of a Research Group's study if necessary where ABRF goals or policies are thought to be compromised.
- 5) The Executive Board will provide a timetable for preparation for the annual meeting in consultation with the chairs of the Research Groups and the meeting organizers.
- 6) The Executive Board will provide a budget for annual activities of the Research Groups.
- 7) The Executive Board may dissolve a Research Group if it is deemed inactive.
- 8) The Executive Board, being directly accountable to the membership of the ABRF, will provide general oversight of the Research Groups via the liaisons to ensure that the goals and policies of the ABRF are not compromised.
- 9) The Executive Board will publish summaries of their Face to Face Meetings on the ABRF web site on a semiannual basis.



## **D. DUTIES and RESPONSIBILITIES of the RESEARCH GROUPS**

It is the duty of the Research Group to carry out the mission of the ABRF as it pertains to a particular area of research. Because the RG receives its mandate from the ABRF and the Executive Board in particular, it is expected to comply with the wishes of the Executive Board in this regard. This includes but is not necessarily restricted to the following:

### *D.1 Planning the study*

The Research Group should plan, usually on an annual basis, a research study or survey providing:

- 1) Evaluation of the average capacity of resource and research facilities to analyze unknown samples in a manner closely analogous to an experimental sample,
- 2) Definition of realistic expectations for both facility operators and users,
- 3) Contribution to improvements in instrumentation, methods, and instrument operation/maintenance by identifying limitations or common problems encountered in laboratories in the field.

The selection of the question or hypothesis to be tested and the planning of the study design are among the most critical components of a successful research study and discussions about a complex or innovative study often begin in the year *prior* to the study taking place. Ideally the study should be designed to be relevant to the prevailing state of the technology and practice of research analysis. The study sample should be designed to allow participants to utilize a number of technical approaches to address the study question, which should be well focused with a limited number of outcomes resulting. For example, a sample may be designed to challenge members or to define the expectations for a routine sample presented to a resource facility.

Prior to initiating any study that involves the distribution of study materials to the membership or initial presentation at a meeting other than the annual ABRF meeting, the RG must submit an outline of the proposed study to the Executive Board for their approval on or before the date designated by the timeline for that year. This may be done while maintaining the anonymous status of the materials. The Executive Board reserves the right to modify the design if necessary where ABRF goals or policies are thought to be compromised.

In addition to allowing the Executive Board to review and comment on the proposed study, the approval procedure will allow the Executive Board to coordinate the studies of its various RGs more effectively and to suggest ways for different RGs to collaborate with each other. The final decision regarding collaboration will usually rest with the RG, barring issues of cost or potential poor reflections upon the ABRF. Both the Executive Board and the RG should bear in mind the increased difficulty and lethargy that will develop if they wish to force an unpopular design or approach on others.

If the committee embarks on a particularly complex or innovative study, which requires extensive planning and preparation, then studies need not be performed each year, but updates

and progress along the projected timeline should be reported at each annual meeting. It is more important for the study to have good scientific value for ABRF members, and to be well-planned and well-executed, than to be carried out rapidly. Research Groups may decide that a study need not be performed each year, however inactive RGs are subject to dissolution by the Executive Board.

### *D.2 Submitting the proposal*

The RG Chair will submit a proposal to the Executive Board for review and comment. The proposal should include a statement of the aims and objectives of the work and its relevance in the core facility scenario. An estimate of the likely costs involved in the study should be provided. Each RG has a budget which accommodates the estimated costs of meetings, distribution of samples, presentation of data at the ABRF annual meeting, and some or all consumables. If an RG is unable to absorb additional costs via the member lab budgets, the Chair may apply for additional funds for a study. Any requests must be supported by full justification of the costs. The Executive Board will review the request and may request revision of the proposed study and/or its costing. Revised studies should be returned to the Executive Board liaison within two weeks for re-evaluation. The timeline for the proposed study should be detailed. The proposal should not exceed two pages.

### *D.3 Testing the sample*

The Research Group should test the samples before they are sent out. General Surveys should be reviewed by the Liaison to the Executive Board before they are opened for submission. Samples should be tested by several members of the RG, using methods requested of the participants (or a potential subset of those methods), before distribution. If the planned study requires the participants to synthesize or prepare a sample for analysis by the research group, then the RG must itself synthesize and test the sample (and necessary controls) by all appropriate analytical methods before study samples are sent out. Results from RG testing may be reported separately from the analysis of the submitted samples, if desired. Members of the research group may still submit samples for analysis anonymously - for example having personnel in their facility analyze and submit the sample.

### *D.4 Requesting Participation*

The Research Group should ask for the participation of all eligible members by e-mail and distribute the object of the study to those who request it. The study may also be publicized on various web bulletin boards, journal, and society webpages to generate additional participation.

Participation by as many members as possible, whatever their motivation, is advantageous to the ABRF and is greatly appreciated by the Research Groups. Participation in the various studies (in a manner designed to guarantee the anonymity of the participant) is the right, but certainly not the obligation, of each member. It is recognized that members may have various motives for participating in the study such as: some laboratories may endeavor to submit

the product of their best possible efforts at attaining high quality data, perhaps to ascertain their limits; some laboratories may use the opportunity to assess their routine performance and accordingly afford no special care to their sample, and some laboratories may use the sample for training new personnel. **Suppliers and manufacturers may participate in the studies, and provide support for the studies, and are subject to the guidelines for vendor participation and support located on the website and discussed in section E, below.**

When reporting results from Corporate Sponsors, manufacturers or other vendors, the RG and the ABRF should remain completely neutral. However, it should be noted that this is not the same as publishing anonymous results from the field, which report the performance of different instruments or studies, anonymous or not, conducted by individuals with no corporate ties but who have access to more than one type of instrument.

The study materials should be finished and distributed at least 2-4 months prior to the time scheduled for the principle presentation of results. The Executive Board encourages the research studies to be geared toward first presentation at the annual ABRF meeting, but this is not required.

#### *D.5 Anonymity*

The Research Group has a duty to guarantee the anonymity of all participants. Neither RG members nor others examining the data should be able to determine the identity of any of the participants. When web-based surveys and data collection are used, particular care must be taken to remove any numbers which might be used to trace the participant. If raw data is published extra precautions are necessary so that the identity of the participant is not made obvious by their instrumentation, techniques, or other descriptors.

#### *D.6 Evaluation and Interpretation of Results*

It is the responsibility of the Research Group to receive, evaluate and interpret the results. It is considered that the data, taken together, constitute a useful assessment of the range of quality or capabilities of ABRF members. However, because of the many variables beyond the control of the designers of the study, it may be inappropriate to draw conclusions about data submitted by individual participants, even though any individual participant may appropriately draw conclusions about their own data.

Do not over-interpret the results. Consider that there is generally no information provided on instrument performance, QA/QC, etc., such that results document the ‘typical’ performance as a cross-section of general resource facilities.

Examples of the use of data from an overall study may include:

- Documentation of the limits of a particular technique, and how those limits change as a function of time. A laboratory that is functioning only at the nanomole level while most others are at the femtomole level may need to upgrade its capabilities; conversely, a

laboratory performing at the limits of the technology may use the study to document to collaborators that further increases in sensitivity are not practical.

- Documentation of the trends among core laboratories to utilize newer technologies. For example, a study by the Peptide Synthesis Research Group documented an almost universal shift from BOC to Fmoc chemistry within a single year.
- Documentation of the acceptance of new instrumentation.

#### *D.7 Presentations, Abstracts and Publications*

It is the responsibility of the Research Group to present the results in a timely and unbiased manner to the membership and the scientific community. This includes both oral presentations at meetings as well as manuscripts submitted for publication in a suitable journal or book. Since the RGs are formed in part to contribute to "the education of resource facility and research laboratory staff, users and administrators and interested members of the scientific community"<sup>3</sup> they are encouraged to publish their studies in peer-reviewed journals such as the Journal of Biomolecular Techniques or similar journal as the merits of the study dictate. Creditable publications attract new members and will provide a "yardstick" against which all members of the scientific community can measure their performance, whether or not they participated in the study. These publications constitute a major portion of ABRF applications for funding opportunities, and it is important that the publications be of the highest quality possible. The primary responsibility and editorial license for manuscripts, abstracts, and presentations resulting from the work of the RG should remain with the RG. The RG should allow the Executive Board to review manuscripts prior to publication. Authorship should be left to the discretion of the RG and, because the work described is the responsibility of the authors, they have the final decision as to content, as long as the goals and policies of the ABRF are not compromised. Any posters presenting the study should be based on a complete analysis of the data. RGs should be aware of the publication policies of the journal to which the manuscript will be submitted. Decisions on the suitability of presentations, abstracts and posters are left to the discretion of the RG, in consultation with their Executive Board liaison.

#### *D.8 Publication of Written Updates*

The Research Group should contribute semi-annual written updates for publication on the ABRF web site or in the *Journal of Biomolecular Techniques*.

#### *D.9 Participation in the Annual ABRF Meeting*

Research Groups should participate in ABRF sponsored meetings and must notify the organizers of the meeting by the date given in that year's timeline if the group needs thirty minutes or an hour for presentation. (RGs may also submit proposals for tutorials or Education Workshops. These ideas may or may not be accepted by the organizers. The deadline for submission will be determined each year and the groups notified as to the date.) It is the responsibility of the Research Group to contact the organizers of the meeting and formally

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<sup>3</sup> Bylaws, Article I, Purpose, Section 1. C.)

request time for making oral presentations and for identifying speakers and/or session topics. RGs proposing an Education Workshop should contact the chair of the Education Committee regarding topics. The primary responsibility and editorial license for manuscripts, abstracts, and presentations resulting from the work of the RG should remain with the RG.

#### *D.10 Impartiality with Regard to Commercial Concerns*

It is the duty of the Research Group to remain completely impartial in regard to any commercial concern that might stand to gain from the Research Group's activities.

### **E. GENERAL ISSUES**

#### *E.1 Budget*

The Executive Board will establish a budget for the individual Research Groups' expenses. It is suggested that each group set a policy and priorities for spending these funds. Requests for funds beyond this amount may be presented to the Executive Board along with the study proposal, or at other times in advance of the expenditure. Original receipts should be sent to the ABRF office for reimbursement.

#### *E.2 Timeline*

A timeline, with dates for submission of proposals for Education Workshops, tutorials, study proposals, and presentation requests for the annual ABRF meeting will be developed each year by the Executive Board in consultation with the meeting organizers for the following year, and the chairs of the RGs. One of the purposes of the timetable is to facilitate communication between the organizers of the meeting and the RGs. Another purpose is to set realistic goals for studies to be presented at the annual ABRF meeting. This timeline will be distributed to the RGs during the RG/Comm Chairs' Orientation prior to the annual meeting.

#### *E.3 Reimbursements*

It is expected that many communications between committee members will be carried out by email. However, planning of complex studies, review of data, and strategy sessions often require conference calls. It is typical now for all RGs to hold regularly-scheduled online (Zoom) meetings at least monthly (or more often as necessary), which will be covered by the RG yearly budget.

#### *E.4 Conflict of Interest*

The Conflict of Interest policy applies to everyone who serves the Association, including the Executive Board, Research Group and Committee members, the Editorial Board, meeting organizers, and employees. The policy states that individuals who wish to serve the ABRF must complete a form that discloses any potential conflicts of interest to the President of the Executive Board. The President then treats this as a confidential disclosure: the President can discuss a potential conflict of interest with other Executive Board members only when the individual who wishes to serve agrees to this. Under no circumstances will a potential conflict of interest be discussed beyond the Executive Board. After review, the President will give notice that the individual can serve without restriction, can serve in some capacities but perhaps not others, or cannot serve.

Conflicts of interest are defined in the written policy that accompanies the disclosure form and can be obtained from the ABRF website and are electronically submitted.

#### *E.5 Distribution of ABRF samples to and use of data by study participants*

The following policy for distribution of "unknown" test samples to corporate sponsors was reviewed by current (1990-91) corporate sponsors and approved by the ABRF Executive Board on January 10, 1991. It was updated by the ABRF Executive Board in January 1992, and March 2000. It was further revised by the Executive Board in August 2010 and approved by the Corporate Advisory Council.

##### *E.5.1 Sample requests*

All individuals, vendors and manufacturers should have the opportunity to receive aliquots of unknown test samples from pertinent ABRF research groups in a timely fashion. In the event a participant requests more than one or two aliquots of a sample, the requestor should provide rationale justifying the request, including details of the analytical plan for utilizing the sample.

***All samples sent to participants must include the “RG Study Participation Guidelines” which is located within the members’ section of the web site and summarized below.***

##### *E.5.2 Recommended use and release of ABRF unknown test sample results*

Academics, contract research organizations, corporate sponsors and suppliers (herein referred to as suppliers) are encouraged to participate fully in ABRF RG studies. Supplier participants are typically denoted in the study results with a “s” preceding an anonymous participant identification number. Suppliers may receive and use ABRF standard samples, either on the instruments and methods for which they were designed or in new and creative ways. However, the decision as to whether a company wishes to analyze ABRF samples is entirely an individual corporate decision and acceptance of samples from ABRF entails no obligation to use them for this purpose.

Individuals, including suppliers, who accept samples from ABRF are expected to comply with the following specific recommendations designed to protect the confidentiality of the initial study and to minimize inappropriate or misleading advertisements:

#### *E.5.2.a. Confidentiality*

Suppliers and other study participants should not release any characteristics of an ABRF sample to outside parties prior to public disclosure of these characteristics by ABRF. Disclosure by ABRF is defined as public release of the nature of the unknown, generally at a national meeting or by distributing reprints or other documentation to members and the scientific community.

#### *E.5.2.b. Publishing or distributing data*

After disclosure of sample characteristics by ABRF, suppliers and other study participants may publish or distribute data from their analyses on ABRF samples if they wish. Appropriate uses include tutorials, user bulletins, letters to customers or users, advertisements and other distributions related to marketing, research, or education of customers or users. It is expected that all participants who use and distribute data derived from ABRF samples will comply with the following limitations:

- An ABRF Research Group study is not a competition and under no circumstances should it be referred to as such. Words and phrasing that imply a competition – such as ‘winner,’ ‘best of,’ etc. are strictly forbidden.

Individual performance relative to the anticipated answer is acceptable but should not be directly compared to the performance of other participants. Comparisons to ABRF data should also specifically emphasize that many factors will affect analytical results (for example, the data obtained in a company's R & D lab may exceed feasible expectations for an "average" resource or research facility under routine conditions) and that other participating laboratories may not have the same goals for the desired outcome (i.e., may be training new laboratory members or trying out new techniques).

- Representations and publications should fairly emphasize differences between any data comparisons. For example, instrument reliability may not be concluded by comparing instruments in the field with an average age of 5 years with a participant's run on a new instrument.
- Any comparisons to ABRF data derived from resource or research facilities analyzing samples as unknowns should prominently indicate: the number of samples the participant received, the number of runs performed by the participant, and whether the actual characteristics of the sample were known by the participant at the time the participant's analysis was performed.

- Publications should contain a disclaimer stating that ABRF prepared and provided the sample to all participants, but does not endorse any specific manufacturer, instrument, or laboratory.
- Suppliers and study participants are required to distribute potential publications to the RG for comments regarding compliance with these guidelines.

#### *E.6. Commercializing samples or results of ABRF studies*

The ABRF brand will remain associated with any commercial product that may result from the collaboration between an RG and a supplier, even if intellectual property is sought by the corporate donor.

### **F. DUE PROCESS**

#### *F.1 Removing a Research Group member*

If it is felt by at least a 2/3 majority of the other current members of a Research Group that there is substantial reason, such as when a member is consistently disruptive, counter-productive, or non-productive, a member can be asked to leave. Further, the Executive Board may, with a 2/3 majority vote, initiate removal of any member if it is felt necessary. That member may then either accept the decision and resign voluntarily or may appeal the decision within two weeks to the Executive Board, who will have the final decision. The Executive Board must decide within a period of 2 months after receiving a written appeal. The Executive Board should defer to the wishes of the RG unless there are substantial mitigating circumstances. The departing member should be replaced as soon as possible.

#### *F.2. Removing an Executive Board Liaison*

If an Executive Board Liaison appointed to a Research Group is unresponsive, the Chair should contact the President of the ABRF, who will resolve the matter. If it is felt by at least a 75% majority of the current members of a RG that there is substantial reason, such as a liaison who is disruptive, counter-productive, or non-productive, the Executive Board may be asked to appoint a different liaison to the group. Further, the Executive Board President may reassign Executive Board liaisons as s/he thinks necessary. That liaison may then either accept the decision or may make a written appeal to the full Executive Board who will have the final decision. The Executive Board must decide within a period of 2 months after receiving a written appeal. The Executive Board should defer to the wishes of the RG unless there are substantial mitigating circumstances. A new liaison from the Executive Board will be appointed as soon as possible.



### *F.3 Differences of Opinion between the Executive Board and the Research Group*

If the Executive Board and the Research Group have a difference of opinion on the correct course to be taken in a matter, the RG has the right to appeal the matter to the Executive Board in a written statement. The Executive Board must respond to the statement within one month. If the Research Group is still in disagreement with the decision of the Executive Board, they have the right to have a representative of the group present their opinion to the full Executive Board. In matters of substance, such as dissolving a Research Group or canceling a study, 75% of the current Executive Board members must agree for the action to proceed. If the Executive Board fails to respond to the group within one month of the conference call or the presentation of a written statement, the recommendation of the RG will become final. If the Executive Board cannot reach a decision within three months of the original written appeal, the recommendation of the Research Group will become final.

### *F.4 Dissolution of a Research Group*

#### *F.4.1 Dissolution by Vote of the Research Group*

If time and the rapid advance of technology diminish or eliminate the need for a Research Group, and/or the number of participants in the annual study is very low, any member of the RG may call for a vote on a motion to disband the group. If a 2/3 majority of the RG members are in favor of disbanding, the chair of the group should recommend to the Executive Board that the group be dissolved. The Executive Board is required to act on the chair's recommendation within four weeks of their official notice to disband. If the Executive Board fails to act within this time frame, the recommendation of the RG will become final.

#### *F.4.2 Dissolution by Action of the Executive Board*

If the Executive Board decides by a 2/3 vote that a Research Group is no longer fulfilling the needs of the ABRF it shall place the group on probationary status. The Executive Board must provide the RG with a detailed list of reasons why it has been placed on such status as well as a detailed list of actions that are required for it to continue under the auspices of the ABRF. If after one year on probation, the Executive Board determines that the improvement made by the group has been insufficient, the RG will be dissolved. A dissolved RG has the right to appeal the decision or to petition the Executive Board for reestablishment after reorganization.

### *F.5 Establishment of a New Research Group*

Either the Executive Board or a member may determine the need to develop a new Research Group due to the development of new technology. If the Executive Board decides to create a new group, it will ask a member of the ABRF to act as the chair of the new group. If a member takes the initiative, they should submit a proposal to the Executive Board. A poll may be used to gauge the level of interest of the membership in the proposed group. If there is sufficient interest, the Chair of the proposed new group should draft a mission statement for the group and submit it to the Executive Board for approval. After approval is received, the chair

may follow the usual procedures for selecting new members for a Research Group. It is understood that a new group will have members serving terms of unusual lengths until a rotation is established.

#### **G. Degree of Autonomy**

The Research Group should have a substantial degree of autonomy in conducting its tasks as long as it remains within the policies and framework of the ABRF, carrying out the wishes and intentions of its parent organization. At the same time, it is also recognized that the task to which the RG is called is very demanding and time-consuming - the task of coordinating the efforts of members from diverse geographical locations to work in concert while faced with very real time constraints is difficult in its own right without the need to consult extensively with additional individuals. When the RG accepts the responsibility of conducting its activities as outlined in these Guidelines, it also accepts the authority from the Executive Board to meet that responsibility. The Executive Board member of the RG is present to monitor the actions of the RG only should the need for intervention arise.