

Leprosy Research Initiative Scientific Review Committee

Rules and regulations

1. Mandate and Accountability:

a. The Scientific Review Committee (SRC) is responsible to the LRI Executive Group (EG). The LRI EG comprises the executive directors of the Full Partner organisations and acts as the governing body of LRI, making executive decisions. The CEO of NLR (until No Leprosy Remains) is the director of the LRI EG and the LRI Secretariat is based at NLR Office in Amsterdam.

2. Composition and Appointment:

- a. The SRC holds at least ten members (including a Chairperson and optionally a Deputy Chairperson), each of whom monitors relevant field(s) of research. The composition of the SRC should reflect the portfolio of project types being supported.
- b. SRC membership is a voluntary position; expenses incurred for travel and stay will be reimbursed.
- c. Members of the SRC should not be affiliated with LRI Partners (Annex 1) and cannot be current grantees or serve in key roles on project proposals submitted for consideration of funding to the LRI during their term(s).
- d. Members serve for a maximum of two terms (eight years). A schedule of the duration of all SRC members is maintained by the LRI Secretariat. Ideally, the members who resign and their successors should both be present in at least one SRC meeting to allow for a smooth handover.
- e. In the event of a vacancy on the SRC, all SRC members, the LRI Steering Committee (SC) and the LRI EG are invited to nominate potential candidates. Nominations are considered by the SRC. The SRC appoints its own committee members and informs the LRI EG of its decision accordingly. The appointment of the Chairperson and an optional Deputy Chairperson is made by the LRI EG.

3. Mandate and Functions:

- a. Assess the scientific quality, merit, relevance and feasibility of submitted research proposals and to make recommendations to the LRI EG concerning funding and Anesvad Director General when concerning the RESILIENTD Grant.
- b. Monitor the progress of the ongoing (Flagship and RESILIENTD) projects. Each research project is assigned to one SRC member, based on profile.
- c. Provide advice to the LRI EG regarding the policy on funding scientific research.
- d. Contribute and participate during events such as the LRI Spring Meeting.
- e. Nominate potential candidates for the audit team. Every five years, independent reviews (audits) of the quality and relevance of research funded by the LRI are conducted by a team of international experts.
- f. Together with the SC, discuss and advise the EG, Director, and Secretariat on processes and activities, including new developments such as new grants and collaborations.

4. Research Priorities Framework

- a. The LRI research priorities serve as a content framework to invite research proposals for funding by the LRI and also to assess the relevance of the proposals and progress reports against the priorities described in the framework.

5. Meeting Frequency and Format

- a. The SRC meets online at least twice a year; in spring (April) and autumn (end September/early October). The SRC Spring meeting is largely devoted to reviewing the progress of ongoing research projects with a focus on the previous calendar year. During this meeting, all projects and their progress are briefly discussed, and either receive approval or may require further clarifications before approval.
The SRC meeting in Spring is scheduled to coincide with the LRI Spring Meeting. The LRI Spring Meeting is a 2-day event and an important platform for presenting and discussing progress and results from ongoing research projects, as well as for shared learning and networking. Once every three years, the SRC and LRI Spring Meetings are held in person; in other years, it takes place online.
The SRC Autumn online meeting is devoted to the assessment of newly submitted research proposals and to discussing the progress of the supported projects. In years when the Research Capacity Strengthening Grant is launched, an additional online SRC meeting is held in May to assess submitted applications.
- b. The advice given by the SRC plays a major role in the decision-making of the LRI EG regarding the funding of research proposals and to the Anesvad Director General concerning the RESILIENT Grant.
- c. Outside these main meetings, SRC members are contacted as needed by the LRI Secretariat to advise on matters related to projects within their portfolios.

6. Meeting Preparation and Attendance

- a. The Chairperson of the SRC and the LRI Programme Officer, with assistance from the LRI Support Officer, prepare all meetings. The LRI Coordinator will attend all meetings. If desired, a CEO of an LRI partner may attend the SRC meetings also.
- b. The LRI SC's Chairperson and one other SC member may join the SRC meetings as observers. Observers may listen to discussions and remain informed of the SRC's deliberations, but they may not offer advice or participate in decision-making. If the LRI SC Chairperson is unable to attend, another SC member may attend in their place.
- c. All LRI SC members are welcome to attend the LRI Spring meeting when the research groups give their presentations on the progress made in the last year. The progress presentation sessions at this meeting are chaired by the SRC and co-chaired by the SC.
- d. The SRC Chairperson may join the EG meetings as an observer.

7. Proposal Submission and Review Process

- a. Researchers interested in applying for funding by the LRI should complete and submit a Letter of Intent via the online LRI Grant Management System following a call for proposals. These will be screened by the LRI SC. If the LRI SC's feedback is positive, the applicants are invited by the LRI Secretariat to submit a full proposal via the online portal by early May.
- b. Full proposals will be assessed by (at least) two independent/external reviewers, selected by the SRC Chairperson from the database of international experts that is kept by the LRI Secretariat. The assessments will be completed in the online portal. After this review, the

anonymous comments will be shared with the applicant no later than the third week of July. The applicant has the opportunity to respond to these comments with a rebuttal (and submit a revised proposal, if relevant) at the latest by the last week of August.

- c. The LRI Secretariat assigns each proposal to two SRC members. These SRC members will assess the proposals, the external assessments and rebuttal (when applicable). All the relevant documents will be available for the SRC via the online portal at least two weeks prior to the Autumn meeting. The SRC will complete an online assessment of the proposals in the portal.
- d. During the SRC meeting, the SRC discuss the research proposals and decides whether or not to recommend a given proposal for funding by the LRI. When an SRC member cannot be present, they will be requested to submit feedback in the portal prior to the autumn meeting for the proposals in their portfolio.
- e. If several proposals have been recommended for funding by the SRC, the SC may rank them according to perceived priority. The SC also advises the EG on which proposals may be available for Turing Foundation co-funding, according to the scope of the project and Turing's priorities. The SRC recommendations and the SC's comments/ranking are forwarded to the LRI EG, which, taking all comments into consideration, decides whether the proposal will be funded from the LRI joint fund and which proposal will be presented to the Turing Foundation for co-funding.
- f. For the RCS grant, a different timeline and review process apply. Full proposals are not assessed by external reviewers. Applicants submit their proposals in May, after which SRC reviewers assess the full proposals and decide whether to recommend them for funding by the LRI. The SC then reviews the SRC feedback and provides guidance on priority and operational relevance; if multiple proposals are recommended, the SC may also rank them. The combined feedback from the SRC and SC is submitted by the LRI secretariat to the LRI EG, which makes the final funding decision at its June meeting.

8. Ongoing Project Monitoring

- a. Ongoing projects are required to submit, on a bi-annual basis, progress reports (March and September) and a final report (within 3 months after completion of the study). The progress report due in September should include a plan of activities and a budget for the following year.
- b. The SRC assesses these submitted reports and advises the LRI EG regarding the progress of these projects. This monitoring function includes the RESILIENTD grant.
- c. For the Research Capacity Strengthening Grant, the SRC's role is limited to the initial application review. The SRC will assess proposals to ensure they meet a basic scientific threshold, taking into consideration both scientific merit and capacity building merit. Thereafter, monitoring of progress reports is the sole responsibility of the SC. The SRC has no ongoing monitoring role for these grants.

9. Decision-Making

- a. Decisions of the SRC regarding recommendations to LRI EG are preferably consensus-based, and if necessary based on a majority vote of the SRC members that are present. Any minority opinions are added to the SRC's advice to the LRI EG.
- b. The presence in person, by video conference of a quorum of the members is required for any meeting of the SRC. Observers who are present are not allowed to vote.

- c. In case proposals are considered from an institution with which an SRC member has connections, the member concerned will abstain from the decision-making process.

Code of Conduct

All members of the SRC are expected to adhere to the highest standards of integrity, impartiality, and professionalism. The following principles apply:

1. Operational Expectations

- a. Meeting attendance: SRC members are expected to attend all scheduled meetings (online or face-to-face). If a member cannot attend, they must inform the SRC Chair and the LRI Secretariat at least one week in advance, where possible, or as soon as circumstances allow.
- b. Review deadlines: Members are expected to complete their assessments of proposals and progress reports by the deadlines communicated by the SRC Chair or Secretariat. Timely reviews are essential to the integrity of the LRI funding cycle.
- c. Delays and communication: If a member anticipates being unable to meet a deadline, they must notify the SRC Chair or Secretariat as early as possible (ideally no less than 48 hours before the deadline).

2. Conflicts of Interest

- a. Grantee Status: No SRC member may be a current LRI grantee. Having been a grantee in the past (i.e., prior to joining the SRC) is permitted and does not constitute a conflict of interest solely on that basis. However, any past association with a project under active review must be disclosed.
- b. Disclosure: SRC members must disclose any real, potential, or perceived conflict of interest at the earliest possible opportunity, including any affiliation or relationship that could reasonably be seen to influence their impartiality. Upon disclosure, the SRC Chair and members will determine the appropriate course of action, which may include recusal from specific discussions or decisions.

3. Confidentiality

- a. All information contained in research proposals (LoIs, full proposals, rebuttals, reviewer comments, progress reports, and SRC deliberations) is strictly confidential.
- b. SRC members shall not share, discuss, or disclose any proposal-related information with individuals outside the SRC, the LRI Secretariat, the LRI SC, or the LRI EG, unless explicitly authorised to do so.
- c. SRC members shall not use any information obtained through their role on the SRC for personal, professional, or financial gain, nor shall they share such information with any third party.
- d. SRC members shall take all reasonable measures to ensure that confidential documents are stored securely and not accessible to unauthorised individuals (e.g., using password-protected devices, avoiding printing where possible, and shredding printed materials after use).
- e. The obligation of confidentiality continues indefinitely, even after a member leaves the SRC.

4. Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

- a. SC members shall not use generative AI tools (e.g., large language models such as ChatGPT, or similar) to review, assess, score, or provide feedback on any Lols, full proposals, and progress reports or any other confidential submission to the LRI.
- b. AI may be used for minor, non-evaluative administrative tasks (e.g., grammar checking, summarising publicly available information) only if no confidential proposal data is uploaded or shared with the AI tool.

5. Breach of Code of Conduct

Any suspected breach of this Code of Conduct will be discussed with the LRI Secretariat and with the person involved and, if the suspicion remains, reported to the SRC Chair and the LRI EG. Depending on the severity of the breach, the LRI EG may decide on the dismissal of the member from the SRC.

Annex 1

LRI Partners 2026:

- Nederlandse Stichting voor Leprabestrijding (NLR)
- German Leprosy and Tuberculosis Relief Association (GLRA)
- Hope Rises International (formerly American Leprosy Missions)
- The Leprosy Mission International (TLMI)
- Anesvad Foundation
- Damien Foundation (Associate Partner)
- St Francis Leprosy Guild (Associate Partner)