



Canadian Association of Research Ethics Boards

Revised Strategic Plan 2011 - 2015

Prepared by the CAREB Board of Directors 2010 - 2011

Approved on April 30, 2011

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Mission

CAREB is a national organization dedicated to promoting human participant protection in research.

Vision

CAREB promotes the ethical conduct of human research, and the protection of research participants, by facilitating research, and supporting organizations in earning and maintaining public trust.

CAREB's vision is to:

- promote professionalism through sharing of expertise, experience, information and knowledge;
- represent and communicate the perspectives and concerns of Research Ethics Board (REB) professionals in local, national and international policy development and implementation;
- increase the visibility of the REB's mandate, and advocating for the appropriate allocation of resources needed to thereby ensure the fulfillment of this mandate, including adequate research ethics review and protection of research participants;
- provide education and resources needed to successfully promote ethical conduct of research.

Background

CAREB was established in 2000 as a community of REB professionals, namely chairs, members and administrators of research ethics boards. Faced with increasing responsibilities and working in a challenging research environment, a desire emerged for professionals to share best practices and to work together to improve visibility and credibility within their own organizations, the research community, and the public at large. With major policy discussions underway, there was a clear need for a strong representative voice in national discussions to ensure that the issues and concerns of the REB would be heard and considered in policy development.

CAREB's membership is enthusiastic, highly motivated, generous of spirit, collaborative, action-oriented and shares a strong sense of community and purpose. As a volunteer supported organization, CAREB relies on the expertise and energy of its members to

forward its mission and to conduct its business functions, including: organizing and running the annual national conference; creating timely and thoughtful responses to national initiatives; establishing position and guidance documents; and developing and facilitating education and outreach initiatives.

Over the past decade, a growing membership and positive feedback from CAREB members on its offerings – national conferences, regional workshops and educational sessions – have suggested that CAREB continues to be relevant to its members. In its first ten years, CAREB has established a firm foundation upon which to build and has earned a “seat at the table” in many national policy setting discussions.

CAREB’s current focus is to continue its growth as a national organization dedicated to serving the pragmatic needs of its membership, and to consolidate and strengthen its ability to do this well and over the long term. In particular, CAREB is evolving from an organization driven by a few key members to a more broadly based organization by strengthening its ability to recruit experienced and talented individuals to lead and participate in its working groups and board and implement a more sophisticated succession plan. Collaboration with other research ethics organizations in Canada and internationally must also be forged.

CAREB Values

- **Highest ethical standards** in the conduct of research involving human participants.
- **Professionalism**through formal and informal continuing education and outreach offerings.
- **Responsiveness and accountability**to our membership, to the profession, to the research community and to the public.
- **Knowledge exchange**..... sharing, expertise, knowledge and information.
- **Volunteerism** to conduct and support the work of CAREB.
- **Inclusiveness**..... of all who promote the values and objectives of CAREB.

Environmental Context

With the significant public investment in research, and its importance to Canada’s national health, and social and economic well-being, research activity has intensified in all sectors. Consequently, REB workloads are growing. Furthermore, the high visibility of sensitive topics such as conflict of interest, scientific integrity and review of research

contracts has led to an increasing expectation that REBs become involved in such issues which, though important, go beyond the original mandate of ethics review of research projects involving humans.

Research with human participants, and ethics review of such research, is a high visibility topic which continually captures media and political attention. This has resulted in a heightened public and regulatory awareness of both the importance of research ethics review as a critical process that assures the protection of research participants, and of the risks if this process is sub-standard. As a consequence, regulatory complexity is continually increasing. Laws governing privacy, patient and research participant protection, and other regulations have a direct impact on the work of REBs in Canada. In addition, as human participant research often spans borders or is funded by foreign sponsors, CAREB must also be concerned with US and international regulatory environments and policy development.

Fulfilling the Mandate (Benefits of Membership)

CAREB provides:

- leadership in representing the voice of research ethics in Canada, nationally and internationally.
- a collaborative environment that is unique in bringing together REBs, research participants, researchers, sponsors, funding agencies and regulatory bodies in a common forum in support of ethics and integrity.
- a strong collective voice to respond to policy developments. CAREB through its continuous and ongoing interaction with researchers, external agencies and institutional management, and collective expertise in delivering ethics review, brings a unique perspective to policy debates.
- up to date information on proposed changes to the research ethics environment and the impact of this evolution on operational practices.
- tools and resources, including comparative and benchmarking information, standard operating procedures, organizational models, and template documents.
- continuing educational opportunities and resources that support ethics review and that will help maintain and upgrade professional qualifications.
- visibility, credibility, recognition and respect for the role and importance of REBs in their support of ethics and integrity in research at the very highest level.

Strategic Goals

- 1. Develop a robust and self-sustaining financial base sufficient to achieve short term and long term goals and objectives.**
- 2. Create a robust organizational structure sufficient to support the national scope of the CAREB mandate, including but not limited to:**
 - Appointment of the position of an Executive Director or equivalent
 - Appointment of essential support staff
 - Definition of suitable terms of reference: leadership and support roles
 - Definition of a suitable governance structure
 - Definition of financial and ethical accountability
- 3. Define the immediate priorities of CAREB, the goals to be achieved by 2015, and the organizational and structural elements necessary for success:**
 - Professional Development Committee (PDC)
 - Membership Services Committee (MSC)
 - Conference Planning Committee (CPC)
 - Liaison Committee and ad hoc working groups (e.g. SAE, Accreditation)

Pending the attainment of the above over-riding Strategic Goals (1-3), CAREB should pursue its current mission and core values within the limits of current human and financial resources:
- 4. Development of research ethics policy in collaboration and/or consultation with peer organizations, regulators and funding bodies:**
 - Provide leadership in the development of governance and accreditation of REBs;
 - Develop positional statements and guidance documents on issues relevant to CAREB.
 - Provide timely and thoughtful responses to documents and proposals from national and international organizations relevant to CAREB.
- 5. Serve as the national information and communication hub for REB professionals and their organizations through the development, sharing and dissemination of policies, procedures, guidelines and best practices:**
 - Develop resource documents and information materials.

- Develop template documents for roles, responsibilities and functionality of REBs, including job descriptions and model policies.
- Implement a continuous process to identify best practices, data management standards, and organizational models.
- Provide categorized access to Standard Operating Procedures through CAREB's website, with the agreement of all source organizations.
- Develop benchmark data on workloads, costs, salary ranges, operational efficiency, etc.
- Further enhance and maintain the CAREB web site as a key communications vehicle.

6. Advance professionalism in the field through training and educational opportunities in a variety of formats.

- Organize and hold an annual national conference with relevant and professional speakers and topics.
- Deliver training workshops including REB Administrator 101 and 201 and REB 301.
- Develop specialized workshops on relevant topics and emerging issues.
- Work with regional groups of CAREB (e.g. CAREB-Ontario, CAREB -West) to support them in their provision of educational and professional opportunities.
- Provide access to educational resources through the CAREB website.
- Develop strategic alliances with other organizations such as PRE and PRIM&R to define educational and professional needs of REB professionals and develop programs addressing these needs.

7. Support a greater role for the public in shaping policy in research ethics.

8. Advocate for the needs of CAREB members and their organizations as appropriate.

- Give a voice to the REBs in the discussion of resource allocation.
- Support REB professionals and professionalism in situations of potential institutional conflicts of interest.

9. Continue to strive for effectiveness in research ethics and protection of human participants in research.

- Facilitate and support research endeavours in evaluating effectiveness in ethics review.
- Encourage research in research ethics with a focus on optimizing research ethics and ethics review.
- Facilitate the implementation of evidence-based recommendations.