

# Abandoning Science Advice

*One Year in, the Trump Administration is  
Sidelineing Science Advisory Committees*  
[www.ucsus.org/scienceadvice](http://www.ucsus.org/scienceadvice)

Appendix A: Methodology

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## **Appendix A: Methodology**

This UCS analysis drew heavily on the publicly available Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) database managed by the General Services Administration. FACA, which became law in 1972, governs virtually all federal advisory committees, with the goal of improving oversight and formal reporting procedures (Ginsberg and Burgat 2016; US Congress 1972; GSA n.d.). UCS focused on committees whose functions were listed as “scientific and technical,” prioritizing our review based on each agency’s number of science advisory committees and its science-related missions.

FACA requirements apply to all agencies, but implementing the requirements is left to the agencies. All agency and committee managers constantly update the FACA database; it is their responsibility to ensure that data are up to date and accurate. Each committee operates according to a charter that is updated every two years to reflect changes in need or function. UCS drew on the database’s collection of charters to learn the number of meetings each advisory committee was directed to hold as well as its mission, annual budget, processes for ensuring balanced membership, and other procedural information.

To gain detail and context on advisory committees under the Trump administration, we interviewed dozens of scientific advisors on 20 committees between July and December 2017. We interviewed current and former advisors from the Environmental Protection Agency, the Centers for Disease Control, the Federal Emergency Management Authority, and the departments of the Interior, Labor, Energy, and Agriculture. This report cites as anonymous all interviewees who asked us not to quote them by name.

### **ADDITIONAL NOTES ON THE DATA**

All meeting and membership data for 2017 come from committee websites. All data are for fiscal years.

The FACA database has charters dating back to 2002; data on meeting numbers and membership go back to 1997. The UCS analysis on whether committees met their charter-prescribed meeting numbers goes back to 2002. The analysis on whether committees met sufficiently considered only active advisory committees at the agencies.

This report’s percentages and figures related to charter-directed meetings use strict criteria, even for charters that specify only an approximate number of meetings per year. If a charter calls for approximately four meetings a year and the committee held three, it did not meet the requirement for the purposes of this report. If the charter calls for four to six meetings a year and the committee met four times, it met the requirement.

We accessed meeting information for the EPA Science Advisory Board, the DOI Advisory Committee on Water Information, and the Department of Energy EM Site-Specific Advisory Board directly from the committees’ online calendars in order to count only executive committee meetings and not subcommittee meetings.

OSHA has no science advisory committees and does not appear in aggregate analyses or figures.