

NAS COUNCIL POLICY STATEMENT ON OBJECTIVITY, INDEPENDENCE, AND EXCELLENCE

Each year, thousands of experts contribute to the work of the National Academy of Sciences (NAS), which includes under its federal charter the National Academy of Engineering, the National Academy of Medicine, and the National Research Council (collectively “the National Academies”). These experts—scientists, engineers, health professionals and others—serve on committees, author reports and other products, speak at or participate in events, oversee research and fellowship programs, provide institutional oversight and governance, and engage in many other ways to support the mission of the NAS, and its staff play an essential role in carrying out and supporting all of these activities. The quality, integrity, and reputation of this work is fundamental to maintaining the National Academies’ role as a trusted advisor to the government, the nation, and the world on critical matters involving science, engineering and medicine. The NAS is committed to the following values in all of its work:

Objectivity: All decisions, analyses, advice, and presentations of information are grounded in facts, evidence, and impartial analysis. The National Academies value diverse perspectives and carefully consider alternative viewpoints when formulating advice, convening experts with differing views and perspectives, providing oversight, and conducting all other activities, and strive to foster an environment where all participants can participate fully. A robust suite of policies is consistently applied to ensure that an appropriate range of knowledge and perspectives is drawn upon; to identify, disclose, and mitigate potential conflicts of interest; to communicate relevant background information about participants in National Academies’ activities; and to ensure that staff do not participate in any activity for which they have a conflict of interest.

Independence: The National Academies maintain full autonomy in developing and communicating advice, carrying out their activities, and in making programmatic and strategic decisions, free from undue influence from sponsors, donors, or other interested parties. A robust suite of policies is consistently applied to decisions about governmental support of National Academies’ activities and acceptance of funding from nongovernmental sources. The National Academies’ goal is greater transparency through disclosing both funding sources and relevant relationships for participants in all activities.

Excellence: The National Academies fulfill the NAS Charter’s mandate to marshal the expertise of the nation’s most accomplished scientific, engineering, and medical professionals. Members of the three Academies are elected by their peers for their expertise and experience in their disciplines. Members frequently serve as volunteers alongside others who represent differing perspectives grounded in their own professional expertise and experience relevant to an issue before the National Academies. These volunteers are familiarized with the rigorous processes of the National Academies by staff who often have scientific, engineering, and medical credentials of their own. In addition, one of the National Academies’ hallmark processes ensures the highest quality of its advice by requiring that all products undergo rigorous independent review by a group of experts other than their authors prior to release. This marriage of diverse expertise and disciplined procedures has consistently delivered sound advice that is grounded in evidence.