

May 21, 2025

Mr. Brian Stone
Acting Director, National Science Foundation

The Honorable Brian Babin
Chair, House Committee on Science, Space and Technology
United States House of Representatives

The Honorable Zoe Lofgren
Ranking Member, House Committee on Science, Space and Technology
United States House of Representatives

The Honorable Ted Cruz
Chair, Senate Committee on Science, Commerce and Transportation
United States Senate

The Honorable Maria Cantwell
Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Science, Commerce and Transportation
United States Senate

Dr. Victor R. McCrary, Jr.
Acting Chair, National Science Board

Dear Acting Director Stone, Members of Congress and of the National Science Board,

On April 15, 2025, the National Science Foundation (NSF) dissolved 12 of its directorate and initiative-level advisory committees—panels that have long served as vital sources of expertise and public accountability for the agency. These advisory committees, created under the Federal Advisory Committee Act, are composed of leaders in the sciences who advise the NSF on its role advancing science in the national interest. Their meetings are open to the public and, until they were wiped from the internet following the disestablishment of the committees, the agendas, minutes and records of the meetings were available to the public on the NSF’s website. The justification provided for the termination of the advisory committees was Executive Order 14099, *Commencing the Reduction of the Federal Bureaucracy*. The purported goal of disestablishing these crucial sources of expertise was “to minimize waste, fraud, abuse, and inflation.” But the true cost of this action will not be in dollars saved—it will be in damage done to American scientific leadership, innovation capacity, and global competitiveness.

As recent members of the now-dissolved advisory committees, we write to express deep concern about this abrupt and ill-conceived decision. While the stated goal of the executive order is to minimize waste and fraud, NSF advisory committees do not contribute to bureaucratic bloat. These committees are not composed of federal employees, but of scientists, educators, and industry experts who offer their expertise at nominal cost (committee members are paid a flat rate covering meals and expenses), motivated by a commitment to advance science in the public interest.

The NSF's mission is to promote the progress of science, advance national health and prosperity, and secure the national defense, a charter it pursues through the distribution of competitive, peer-reviewed grants for fundamental research. It is globally recognized as the gold standard for research funding, with a rigorous peer-review process that requires proposals to demonstrate both intellectual merit and broader societal impacts. External peer reviewers, entirely unpaid, ensure that rigorous standards are upheld, and expert panelists are convened (again, nominally reimbursed) to provide guidance to NSF program directors in selecting only the most competitive proposals for funding. But peer review is only one part of a robust system of oversight. Advisory committees provide an additional level of transparency and strategic guidance, helping the agency prioritize investments, ensure public interests are served, monitor outcomes, and remain attuned to emerging trends in science and technology.

The move to eliminate the NSF's advisory committees is part of a larger and extremely concerning series of recent policy moves which will greatly reduce the agency's effectiveness and threaten our country's long-term economic security. Between 50% and 80% of U.S. economic growth has been attributed to advances in science and technology, with social rates of return on R&D investments approaching 40%. NSF funding has underpinned transformative developments in computing, biotechnology, climate science, and beyond. These investments depend not just on funding levels, but on the quality and integrity of decision-making—integrity that advisory committees help ensure.

The damage to American scientific leadership cannot be overstated. For more than 70 years, the NSF has served as a beacon of scientific rigor, trust, and transparency. The advisory committees are a cornerstone of that legacy. Their dissolution sends a chilling message: that independent scientific advice is expendable, and that evidence-based policymaking can be sidelined.

We urge the National Science Foundation to reinstate the agency's advisory committees immediately, and to return to its role pursuing excellence in research, restoring public trust in American scientific progress. We further call on Congress to take action to protect the integrity of scientific governance, and to affirm the critical role of external, independent expert review and oversight in the strategic deployment of federal research investments. America's global leadership in science and innovation and the well-being of future generations depend on it.

Signed (with former advisory committee membership below the signature),

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Adjunct Associate Professor, Seidenberg College of CS&IS,

Pace University, New York

IBM Vice President (retired)

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