

Circular No. A-135

October 5, 1994

TO THE HEADS OF EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENTS AND ESTABLISHMENTS

SUBJECT: Management of Federal Advisory Committees

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1. **Purpose.** This Circular provides guidance and instructions on the management of Federal advisory committees and requires Executive Departments and agencies to establish a committee planning and review process.
2. **Background.** On February 10, 1993, the President signed Executive Order 12838, "Termination and Limitation of Federal Advisory Committees," which requires each Executive Department and agency to reduce the number of discretionary committees by one-third. New discretionary advisory committees are subject to review and approval by the Director of OMB.

On June 28, 1994, the Vice President issued a memorandum reiterating Administration policy regarding the maintenance of the reduction targets mandated by Executive Order 12838, as well as new guidance relating to Executive Branch action on advisory committees proposed by statute. The Vice President's memorandum also called for additional savings in committee costs over and above those achieved under E.O. 12838, as recommended by the National Performance Review (NPR).

3. **Policy.** The Administration is committed to maintaining advisory committees as a way of ensuring public and expert involvement and advice in Federal decision-making. At the same time, the number and cost of advisory committees must be carefully managed. Advisory committees should get down to the public's

business, complete it and then go out of business.

Agencies should review and eliminate advisory committees that are obsolete, duplicative, low priority or serve a special, rather than national interest. New advisory committees should be established only when essential to the attainment of clearly defined Executive Branch priorities, as defined by E.O. 12838, and when they will not exceed an agency's advisory committee ceiling as established by the Executive order's reduction requirement.

The Administration will generally not support the establishment of new statutory committees or legislative language that exempts advisory committees from coverage under the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA). In addition, each agency should make a concerted effort to work with its Congressional oversight committees to reduce the number of existing committees required by statute.

4. **Definitions.** For purposes of this Circular, definitions for "advisory committee," "agency," and other terms are the same as defined in GSA's implementation regulations for the Federal Advisory Committee Act (41 CFR Part 101-6). In addition:

A "non-discretionary advisory committee" is an advisory committee either mandated by Presidential directive or by statute and is subject to the Federal Advisory Committee Act. A "non-discretionary advisory committee" mandated by statute is: (1) specifically identified by name, specific purpose or function in statute, and (2) a committee whose creation or termination is beyond an agency's legal discretion. Advisory committees referenced by general (non-specific) authorizing language or committee report language will not be considered "non-discretionary." In addition, where a statute requires an advisory committee as defined above, but allows for one or more committees, only one committee shall be considered to be required by statute.

5. **Required Action.** Each Executive Department and agency shall report to OMB annually on the results of its efforts to maintain discretionary committee levels required by E.O. 12838, and other actions to reduce its inventory of non-discretionary statutory committees. This submission will be used by the Director of OMB as the basis for approving requests to establish new committees.
 - a. Agency advisory committee management plans will be submitted to OMB and GSA each year and include:
 - (a) performance measures used to evaluate each committee's progress in achieving its stated goals or mission;

- (b) plans for the establishment of any new advisory committees during the coming fiscal year;
- (c) a summary of actions taken to ensure the advisory committee reduction goal is maintained; and
- (d) the results of a review of non-discretionary advisory committees and plans to continue, terminate or merge these groups through legislation. This will include a list of those committees established by specific statutory authority during the current fiscal year regardless of their coverage under the Federal Advisory Committee Act.

- b. With regard to non-discretionary advisory committees mandated by statute, the agency will notify GSA of plans to establish such committees prior to filing the charter required by section 9(c) of the Federal Advisory Committee Act. Such notification will provide GSA with at least 10 working days to review the proposed committee charter and advise the agency of its recommendations.

6. **OMB Responsibilities.** The Office of Management and Budget shall:

- (a) review and approve agency advisory committee management plans pursuant to Section 5 and in accordance with the Executive order;
- (b) set advisory committee ceilings for each agency within the government-wide advisory committee reduction goal established by the Executive order;
- (c) work with agencies to control the establishment of statutory advisory committees and develop legislation to terminate those non-discretionary committees which are no longer necessary;
- (d) ensure that relevant legislation is reviewed consistent with OMB Circular A-19; and
- (e) ensure agencies meet the cost reduction target recommended by the Vice President's National Performance Review.

7. **GSA Responsibilities.** The General Services Administration shall (in addition to its responsibilities under the FACA and as an agency under Section 5 above):

- (a) prepare required justifications and recommendations specified in Section 5 for each advisory committee subject to the FACA and not sponsored by another department or agency;

(b) assist OMB in its management and oversight of advisory committees, including tracking agency compliance with the reduction goals specified by E.O. 12838;

(c) develop guidance, specific reporting formats and instructions to implement Section 5 of this Circular. To the extent practicable, new reporting requirements will be limited to information not readily available through existing sources of data;

(d) provide recommendations to OMB and each agency regarding the continuance or management of advisory committees as required by Section 7(b) of FACA, which mandates an annual comprehensive review of all advisory committees; and

(e) implement section 5(2) of this Circular.

8. **Information Contact.** Questions about this Circular should be addressed to the Federal Services Branch (202) 395-5090. Questions concerning the role of GSA should be directed to the Committee Management Secretariat (202) 273-3556.

9. **Termination Review Date.** This Circular will be subject to review two years after issuance.

10. **Effective Date.** This Circular is effective upon issuance.

Alice M. Rivlin

Acting Director

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