



# Professional Consensus-Building

The National Research Council  
Committee Process

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# 1. Take an Important Topic

- Primary Role of the National Research Council (NRC) is to provide advice to government on issues of science
- Topics identified by:
  - Congressional Mandate
  - Agency Priorities
  - Interest from Foundations/Other Agencies

## 2. Recruit a Good Committee

Review/Approval Process to Ensure:

- Diverse Perspectives
- Balanced Representation of Views
- Unbiased

Add Competent-Dedicated Staff

- Study Director Plays a Key Role

# 3. Provide Time and Data

- ☛ The Committee Meets Over an Extended Period of Time
  - Necessary for understanding perspectives of different disciplines
- ☛ Gathers Data in a Variety of Ways
  - Workshops
  - Commissioned Papers
  - Site Visits/Direct Observation

## 4. Build a Consensus

- Strong Push to Achieve Full Consensus
- Focus on More than Factual Knowledge
  - Place findings in context
  - Draw Conclusions
  - Make recommendations for action (including further research)

# 5. Write to a Broad Audience

- ▣ Diverse Disciplines Promote Reporting to an Audience Beyond any Single Discipline
- ▣ Target Audience Typically Includes Policy-Makers

# 6. Review, Review, Review!

## Review by Additional Experts

- Typically 5 or more, similar in balance and expertise to the committee itself
- Key question is whether conclusions are supported by evidence

## Review Coordinator and NAS Liaison Ensure Adequate Response to Reviews

# Wider Application?

- Significance of Professional Consensus-Building in Knowledge Accumulation
  - Highlight important and persistent findings
  - Suggest applications of these findings
  - Point to fruitful avenues for further work
- How Can This Approach to Broadened
  - In universities settings
  - In government agencies