

DIVISION OF ENGINEERING AND PHYSICAL SCIENCESDF

An Introduction to The National Academies



The Beginnings



President Lincoln signed a congressional charter forming the National Academy of Sciences in 1863 to "investigate, examine, experiment, and report upon any subject of science."

National Academies' Mission

- Principal mission -
 - Improve **government** decision making and public policy;
 - Increase **public** education and understanding;
 - Promote the acquisition and dissemination of **knowledge** in matters involving **science, engineering, technology, and health**.
- Does not receive direct federal appropriations. Individual projects - funded by federal agencies, foundations, other governmental and private sources, and the institution's endowment.

Early Efforts

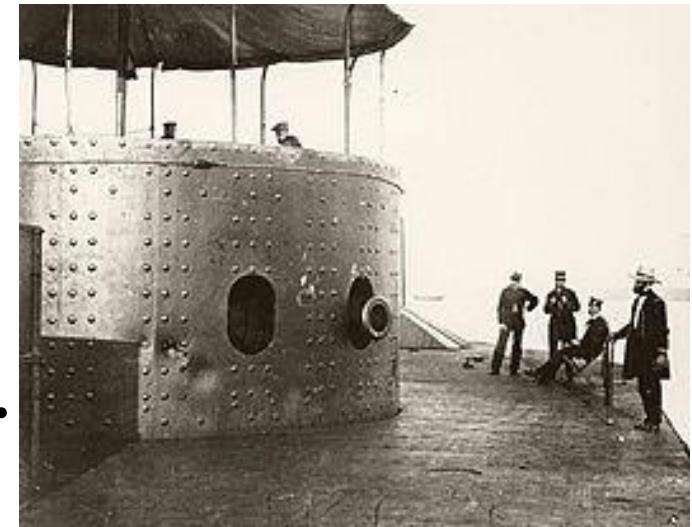
... to report on the feasibility of achieving "uniformity of weights, measures, and coins, considered in relation to domestic and international commerce."



- Committee formed, extensive surveys, time extensions sought . . .
- Delivered report after 3 years, adopt metric system.

Early Efforts (cont'd)

- . . . an investigation of magnetic deviations in iron ships and means for better correction of their compasses.



- Report, with seven sub-reports delivered on-time 8 months later
- Series of specific recommendations; seemed to work

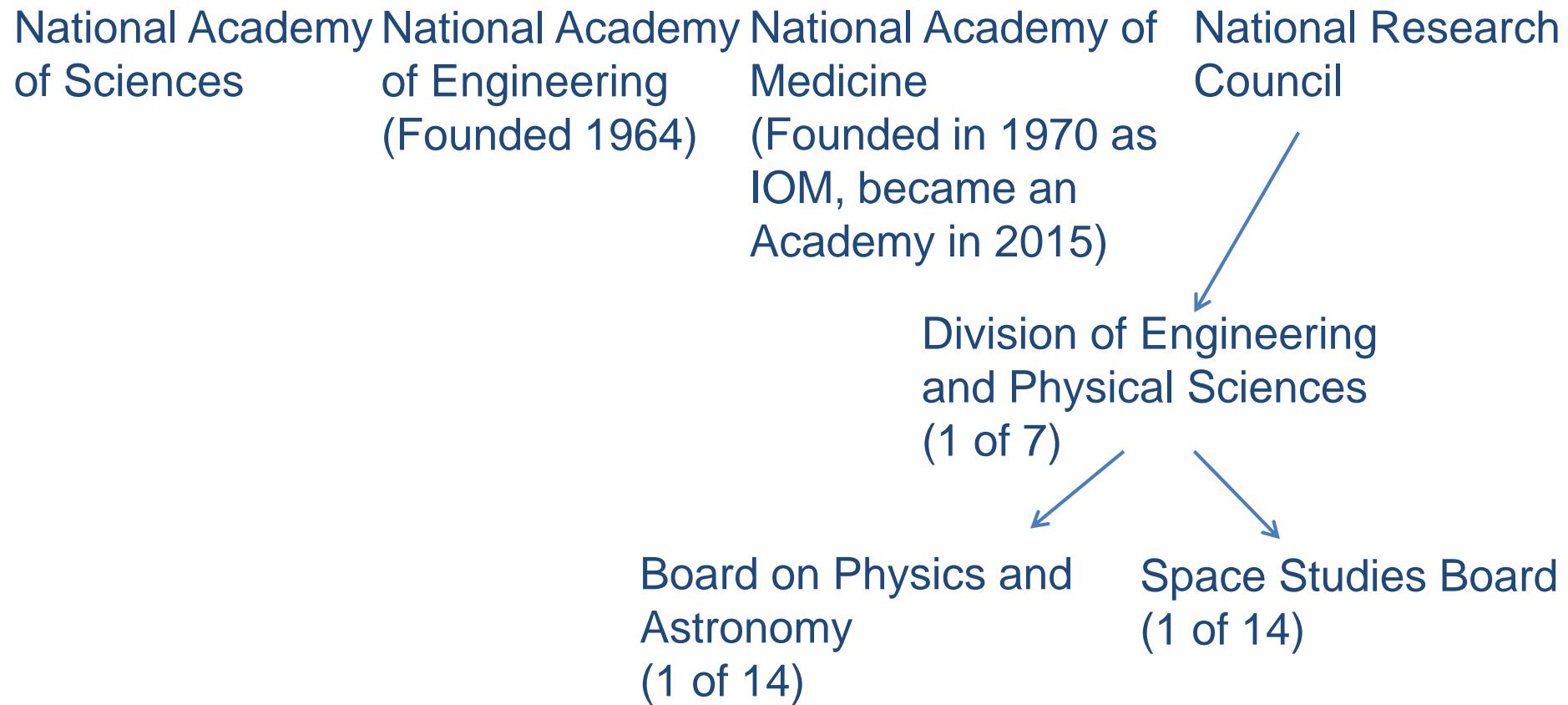
The National Research Council

As scientific issues become even more complex, the small number of NAS members could not keep up with requests for advice.

In 1916, the National Research Council was established as the mechanism by which the Academy would fulfill its mandate to advise the U.S. government.



What are the National Academies?

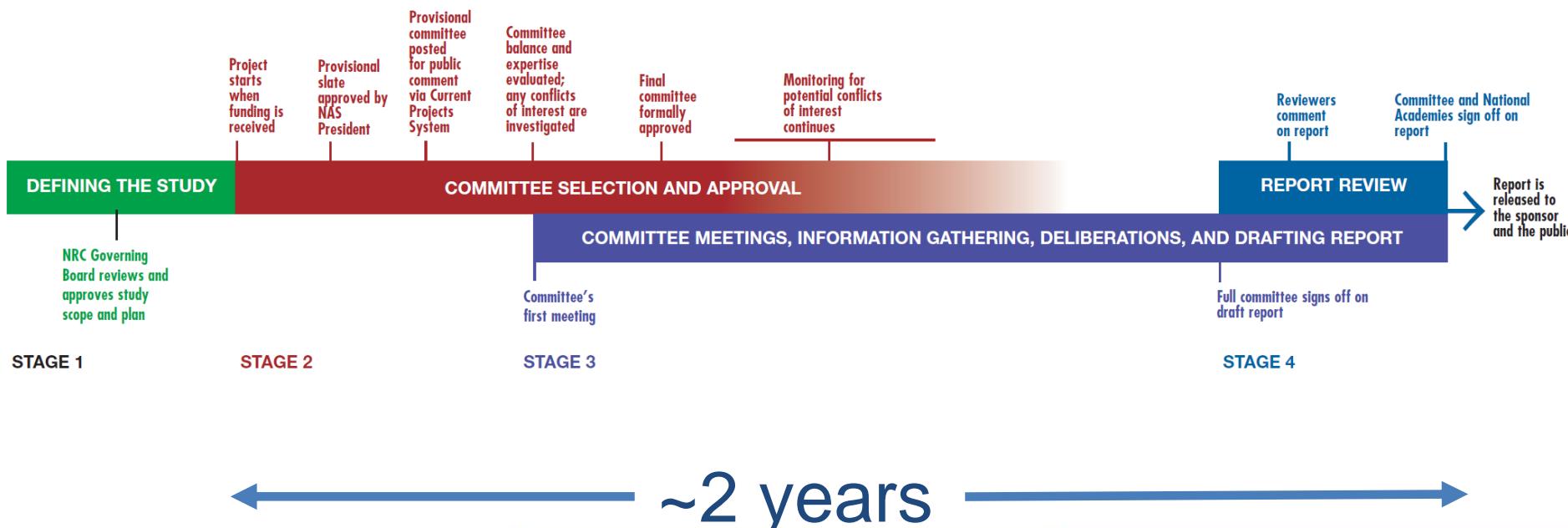


How the National Academies Works

- The Academies has many different activities.
- The best know are its expert committees.
- Approximately 600 committees active at any given time; some permanent, some ad hoc.
- The ad hoc committees are composed of unpaid volunteers from academia and industry who meet 2-6 times to deliberate on, provide advice on defined topics.
- Topics are requested by Congress, federal and state agencies/departments, foundations and corporations, or are self-initiated.

A Decadal Survey is a National Academies Report

A survey follows a process designed to be independent and objective. The review process checks that conclusions and recommendations are supported by the committee's information gathering and deliberations.



Thank you!

Questions?

