SECTION III: Group Federal Officer Management Tools and Access to Advisory Committee Data

The Group Federal Officer (GFO) is not an official term with regards to the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) or any other official government employee that we know of. The GFO was made up by the Committee Management Secretariat to identify the role of a person who holds an agency supervisory position over a group of committees, i.e., the National Park Service in the Department Of the Interior or the National Institutes of Health in the Department of Health and Human Services. The GFO uses the on-line system to manage the sub-group of advisory committees, manage agency users of the system within the sub-group, and, if necessary, to update the information on advisory committees during the current fiscal year. FACA requires that information about the advisory committee be provided at least annually. The web-based database accommodates and builds upon that requirement by both allowing the continual updating of committee information throughout the fiscal year and providing committee management functionality. Keeping the data continuously up-to-date converts the system from a focus on history and records to a focus on management and immediate relevancy. With frequent and timely updates, the system becomes more useful to everyone, ranging from the public user to congressional staff with oversight responsibility.

What is the FACA Database?

The FACA database is a specialized database on the web. The **Federal Advisory Committee Act** originally required that specific data items about advisory committees be collected by the President annually and transmitted to Congress for review. From 1972 through 1996, this data was collected via collated, paper-based reports, produced in the fall of each year after the fiscal year closed. In 1997 and 1998, this on-line, web-based, database system was used by all the government agencies that have advisory committees to collect that data. In 1998, this on-line system was demonstrated to the House Oversight Committee on Government Reform. Since that year, this system has been used to continuously collect and report all of the advisory committee data and Congress no longer requires that a "printed and transmitted" annual report be produced, although the data must still be provided.

The "GFO" user has access with edit and update rights to the current fiscal year's data for their specific committees via the Internet. The GFO is given their access rights, their logon (username) and their initial password by the agency Committee Management Officer (CMO). The GFO, like any public user, can view all of the information on all of the committees available for the current fiscal year in a read-only mode in the Public section of the system. At the same time, only the DFO, or their designee, the GFO or their designee, the agency CMO, or their designee, or a Committee Management Secretariat (CMS) staff member can edit or update the committee data being reported for the current year.

What kind of data is being collected and maintained?

For the GFO, the program collects, totals, and displays
- Committee charters and related information,
- Projected committee renewal or termination dates,
- Distribution of establishment authorities and committee functions,
- Committee members,
- Committee costs,
- Agency's recommendations for continuation or termination of the committee,
- Report titles, publication dates, and electronic copies of the reports,
- Meeting dates, purposes, locations, whether the meetings were open or closed, and electronic copies of the meeting minutes,
- Ongoing committee justification information,
- Performance measurement data,

- GFO contact information,
- Agency users and editing rights, and
- Any web site addresses (URLs).

The database does not contain meeting announcements or committee recommendations to the agency, although the designers have included provisions for those additions in the near future.

How does the GFO use the system?

The system is designed to capture relevant information when first entered by the CMO and DFO, and to carry that information forward from year to year until the information is no longer required.

1) When a committee is first established and chartered by the agency and added to the system by the CMO, the information entered addresses the committee's general information, membership information, and estimated cost information requirements.

2) The CMO and/or the Committee Management Secretariat (CMS) use the **Consultation** process found on the **Committee Menu** page to complete the committee establishment. Since they usually do not use the Consultation feature or make frequent consultations with the Committee Management Secretariat, the GFO and DFO do not have the **Consultation** hyperlink displayed on the **Committee Menu** page they normally view.

3) The CMO adds the DFO as a user to the system and provides the DFO access to the newly created committee.

4) The CMO creates a group of committees for intermediate management.

5) The CMO adds the new committee to the appropriate group (or, in some rare cases, more than one group).

6) The CMO adds the GFO as a user to the system and provides access to the committee group for which the GFO is responsible.

7) The CMO has the DFO or the GFO log onto the system and
- Edit the general information for completeness and accuracy which contributes to the annual report requirements and keeps the **Renewal or Terminate Report** timely and useful,
- Add meetings and reports as they occur,
- Add or delete members as they come and go,
- Add or update costs as they occur,
- Add or update the web address if a web site is created for the committee,
- Add or update their own contact information as it changes,
- Add or update the annual performance measurement data,
- Recommend the continuance or termination of the committee by the end of the fiscal year, and
- Verify the accuracy and completeness of the committee data for the closing year.

The guidance for the above data entry activities is found in the **DFO Help** manual, since the DFO or her designee normally does the data entry and information maintenance. The GFO, or the CMO if she or he chooses to do any or all of the tasks above, would find that the general information data, cost information data, and member information data added during the establishment of the committee has been carried forward to the relevant report pages for each reportable year. At the end of the year being reported and closed, the program carries all of the data entered forward into the new year except for meetings and reports.

The GFO also has access to the public read-only section of the system. This section can be very helpful and useful to their management needs. Using the Search feature, the GFO can discover what other committees exist in other agencies with issues and concerns similar to committees they are responsible for or planning to charter. With that knowledge, the GFO can Drill Down to the specific committees of interest and determine if the system has information useful to them, or they can identify people in the other committee's agency to contact for further investigation. In the Public Access section, the GFO drills down from the general **Year** to the **Agency** to the specific **Committee** to view the desired information. At any time the GFO can **Search** the entire collection for any word or phrase, use a Filter or Database Search to limit the data displayed, and/or Download selected data to a spreadsheet.

The opening screen for the **FACA Database** lets GFOs know that they have found the data repository and lists their options. The most direct address for the system is http://www.facadatabase.gov. The FACADatabase is part of a family of shared-interagency-databases located at http://www.fido.gov. Hyperlinks and buttons control navigation throughout the
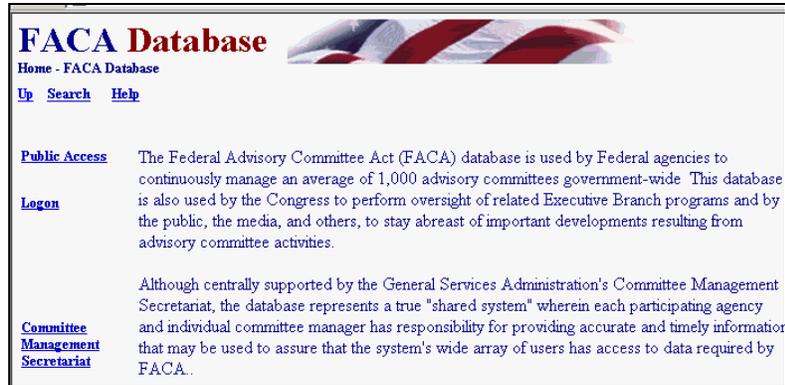

system. The **Navigation hyperlinks** and **buttons** that are visible change depending upon the purpose of the page and the requirements (or rights) of the user. The navigation hyperlinks are located in the top border and the left border areas of each page. GFOs should move from page to page with the navigation hyperlinks or buttons as much as possible and avoid use of the browser buttons (like the arrows to go back or forward).

The reason to avoid use of the browser button where possible is that the **FACA Database** is truly a database, an application running on the web. A database/application operates differently on the Internet than purely informational net pages. Browser buttons and menu options are designed and normally intended to take the user back to previously displayed pages of static, unchanged, and usually, minimally-related or unrelated content. On the other hand, while the pages of a database system might appear to change in content with every "selection, filter, edit, save, insert, or delete", each page has a distinct, "keyed" relationship that the page maintains with the preceding and following pages as the user drills down or moves up through the data.

The five navigation hyperlinks on the opening screen navigate to the
Up,
Search,
Help,
Public Access,
Logon, and
"Committee Management Secretariat" pages.
The cursor becomes a hand as the mouse moves over the hyperlinks so the user can be certain which link is being selected.
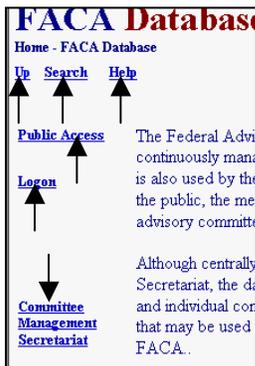
Up, from the home page opening screen moves the user up (or back) to the Federal Interagency Databases Online (FIDO) page. Generally, the **Up** link moves the user up (or back) to the previous screen.

Search, **when it is switched on and working**, allows the user to search for any text or phrase in the entire set of data stored as part of this system. That includes the data comprising the annual comprehensive reviews, the committee charters, and any stored meeting minutes or reports.

Help explains the syntax, terms, and meaning of items of information collected as part of that year's Annual Comprehensive Review. Help displays a selection of manuals that explain the system's functionality to the system's different users. This specific manual we are currently examining is for the part of the system designed for GFO access. The manuals can be viewed on the screen with Microsoft Word or Adobe Acrobat Reader and printed.

Public Access takes the GFO to a page listing the fiscal years in the system and a download center for extracting selected data from the system. The data for the current fiscal year is considered incomplete unless the user is confident that the DFOs for each committee update the information continuously and regularly throughout the year as events take place. At the end of the fiscal year each DFO, GFO, and CMO verify the accuracy and completeness of each committee's data. The information on a committee is not considered or reported as official and complete until that committee has been verified by the CMO for that fiscal year.

Committee Management Secretariat links the GFO to the Committee Management Secretariat's home page, the launching point for a comprehensive examination of the advisory committee process, practices, history, case law, advice and training.

Logging onto GFO Data Maintenance Activities

Logon allows GFOs who are responsible for the committee data and who have editing rights to log on to the current year and view and update the management data. DFOs can update their committees, GFOs can update the committees in their group, CMOs can update all of their agency's committees, and the Committee Management Secretariat's staff can update all the agencies' data. Unless the GFO wants to add or edit some specific committee data or limit the display to just the committees for which they are responsible, there may be no need to log on. All of the information, searches, and most of the reports are available from the Public Access section, the difference being that the Public section is read-only.

Clicking the **Logon** button displays the **Logon** page. The **Logon** page has seven hyperlinks, four data fields and one submit button. The main hyperlinks are **Home**, Up, Search, and Help. **Home** returns to the system's opening page and ends the work session. We discussed **Up**, **Search**, and **Help** above. The additional hyperlinks are **Score 300**, **Presidential Committees**, and **Presidential Members**, which are potentially helpful status reports. The data fields are the **LOGON** Text Box, the **PASSWORD** Text Box, the **OOPS** Check Box, and the **I WANT TO CHANGE** Check Box. The submit button is Continue.

To **Logon**, the GFO enters his/her username in the **Logon:** Text Box field and their password in the **Password:** Text Box field. When the **Continue** button is clicked, the program advances to the GFO's **My Information** page. If the GFO user logs on with their e-mail address as the username, the program advances to the **Committee List** page.

The GFO can change their user information any time they are logging in by checking the **I WANT TO CHANGE** Check Box before they click the **Continue** button. If the user fills out the **My Information** page, including their e-mail, than the **OOPS** Check box will work. To receive an email with their password, the user enters their **LOGON (E-mail address)**, checks **OOPS**, and clicks the **Continue** button. Then the user waits for an e-mail from the system that reminds them of their password.

If the GFO receives a **Logon Error**, they should note the error explanation and contact their CMO to adjust their access rights. If you enter an incorrect Logon or Password, you receive the "Your logon or password is not correct" error.

If your dates for access have expired, you receive "the Logon Date has been exceeded" error.

Logon Error

Your authorized end date has been exceeded. Ask your CMO to extend your user end date.

Please click the Up button.

Logon Error

Your logon is not active. Ask your CMO to update your user information.

Please click the Up button.

If your CMO has designated you as an "inactive" user, you see the "inactive logon" error when you attempt to logon.

The **Score 300** hyperlink displays a color-coded ranking of agencies for the current fiscal year. It is a quick way to rank both the usage of the system by agencies as well as the completeness and accuracy of the data, since one can tell from the color and the number of committees updated just how much data entry/updating activity has occurred. Don't regard it as a "ding". Think of it as a reminder and friendly competition among government employees. The user returns from the **Score 300** page using the **Up** hyperlink.

FACA Database
Logon Page
Home   Up   Search   Help   Score 300   FY2003

This form is for government em
who are providing committee manag

Presidential Committees

Presidential Members

Logon : [   ]
Password: [   ]
☐ Oops. I forgot my p
☐ I want to change m
Contin

Score 300 - Microsoft Internet Explorer provided by General Services Administration

File   Edit   View   Favorites   Tools   Help

Back   ⊙ ⊡ ⌂   Search Favorites Media   ⊡ ⊟ ⊟ ⊟ ⊡ ⊙

Address http://www.fido.gov/facadatabase/score300.asp   Go

FACA Database
Score 300
Home   Up   Search   Help   Score 300   FY2003

Score 300 (Updated + DFO Verified + CMO Verified + CMO Rolled Over = 300)
Scoring Legend   0   1-299   300

Agency	Committees	Updated	Verified By CMO	Verified By GFO	Verified By DFO	CMO Roll Over	Last Time Updated	Total Score
FASAB-Federal Accounting Standards Advisory Board	1	1	1	1	1		2/7/2003 1:58:48 PM	225
SSA-Social Security Administration	1	1	0	0	1		4/16/2003 9:43:09 AM	150
ADF-African Development Foundation	1	1	0	0	0		3/13/2003 11:05:01 AM	75
CFAI-Commission on the Future of the United States Aerospace Industry	1	1	0	0	0		1/24/2003 12:12:46 PM	75
FDIC-Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation	1	1	0	0	0		4/21/2003 7:24:41 AM	75
GSA-General Services Administration	2	2	0	0	0		4/2/2003 9:46:28 AM	75
MKUF-Morris K Udall Scholarship and Excellence in National Environmental Policy Foundation	1	1	0	0	0		3/6/2003 4:49:24 PM	75
NCD-National Council on Disability	3	3	0	0	0		4/23/2003 7:40:35 AM	75
NEH-National Endowment for the Humanities	2	2	0	0	0		4/28/2003 3:01:26 PM	75
DOI-Department of the Interior	115	81	0	3	24		5/16/2003 1:55:37 PM	67
NSF-National Science Foundation	59	50	0	0	0		5/5/2003 4:59:45 PM	63
CCR-Commission on Civil Rights	51	37	0	2	2		5/13/2003 5:59:42 PM	56
DOS-Department of State	18	7	2	2	4		4/29/2003 11:12:45 AM	53
AID-Agency for International Development	2	1	0	0	0		3/18/2003 4:05:35 PM	37
CNCS-Corporation for National and Community Service	2	1	0	0	0		4/15/2003 3:38:01 PM	37

Start | Score 300 - Microsoft ... GFOSystem.doc - Microso...   4:21 PM

Clicking the **Presidential Committees** hyperlink displays basic committee information on committees that are either Presidential in type or established by the President. A committee is Presidential in type if it reports to the president even though it may have been established by Congressional Act. The committee listed in the third row is an example of Presidential type.

Clicking the **Presidential Members** hyperlink displays a list of committee members appointed by the President that are in the current year's member list. These two hyperlinked reports are on the logon page at the request of the White House Personnel office. These reports, like all of the database's reports for the current year, can only be as useful and accurate as the DFOs are consistent and regular in keeping the data up-to-date.

These reports, like most and eventually all of the database's reports, can be downloaded to the user's computer for more direct use and customization via the **Spreadsheet**, **XML**, and **ASCII** hyperlinks. No part of the data kept for public accession online is subject to privacy provisions. Any public user may download all of the publicly displayed data in the online system.

The GFO's Committee List and Management Activities

When the GFO logs on to the system, they proceed straight to the **Committee List** Page for their group. The **Committee List** page provides the GFO with access to any of their committees, and displays the navigation hyperlinks that activate most of their management activities in this web system. We will discuss the navigation hyperlinks first, and then the hyperlinks that access the individual committees.

The Committee List page currently displays eight hyperlinks in three groups. The new hyperlinks on this page are
For the **Reports** group:
- Agency Totals**,**
- DFO Report**, and**
- All Annual Reports
For the **Tools** group:
- Manage Users.
And for the **End of FY** group:
- **None for the moment**
There will be additional GFO management reports added to this page in the very near future**.**

Agency Totals

The **Agency Totals** hyperlink displays the **Totals** page for the group, which are totals of the collected data elements for the current year thus far. The Active and Inactive lines refer to committees for the entire agency. The rest of the lines refer to the distribution of the committees in the group among the elements. New or terminated committees in the group, the distribution of committees by authority or function in the group, the number of meetings, reports, members, costs, etc., etc. The accuracy of the report at any point in time during the current year depends upon the frequency and timeliness of committee information data entry on the part of the DFOs, and that, to some extent, depends on the guidance provided by the GFO to the DFOs.

FACA Database

Agency Totals
Home   Up   Search   Help   Score 300   FY2003   kf gfo GFO

Group: NIH-AIGFO

	ACTIVE	ACTIVE COMMITTEES	246
	ADMIN INACTIVE "Y"	ADMINISTRATIVELY INACTIVE COMMITTEES	11
4.	NEW "YES"	NUMBER OF NEW COMMITTEES	0
8a.	TERMINATE "YES"	NUMBER OF TERMINATED COMMITTEES	0
11.	COMMITTEE AUTHORITY	a. REQUIRED BY STATUTE	3
		b. AUTHORIZED BY STATUTE	5
		c. AGENCY AUTHORITY	0
		d. PRESIDENTIAL DIRECTIVE	0
14.	COMMITTEE TYPE	a. AD HOC	0
		b. CONTINUING	8
		c. PRESIDENTIAL	0
15.	COMMITTEE DESCRIPTION	a. NATIONAL POLICY/ISSUE	0
		b. NON-SCIENTIFIC	0
		c. SCIENTIFIC/TECHNICAL	2
		d. GRANT REVIEW	2
		---GRANT REVIEW SPECIAL EMPHASIS PANEL	1
		e. REGULATORY NEGOTIATION	0
		f. OTHER	3
16a.	REPORTS	NUMBER OF REPORTS	0
17.	MEETINGS	a. OPEN	0
		b. CLOSED	0
		c. PARTIALLY CLOSED	0
		d. TOTAL	0

		DATA ELEMENTS	CURRENT ACTUAL	NEXT ESTIMATE
18.	COMMITTEE COST	a. PERSONNEL PAYMENTS		
		(1) NON-FEDERAL MEMBERS	$25,857.00	$398,800.00
		(2) FEDERAL MEMBERS	$398,800.00	$25,857.00
		(3) FEDERAL STAFF	$3,384,399.00	$3,384,399.00
		(4) NON-MEMBER CONSULTANTS	$16,223.00	$16,223.00
		b. TOTAL TRAVEL AND PER DIEM	$680,869.00	$680,869.00
		c. OTHER	$1,896,327.00	$1,896,327.00
		d. TOTAL	$6,402,475.00	$6,402,475.00
19.	FEDERAL STAFF SUPPORT YEARS	TOTAL FTE YEARS	32	32
5a.	MEMBERS		173	
5b.	SEP MEMBERS		813	
5.	TOTAL MEMBERS SERVING DURING FISCAL YEAR		986	

DFO Report

The **DFO Report** hyperlink displays the **DFO Report** page, a listing of the Committees and the DFOs' contact information. Again, this information is only as useful as the DFOs' timeliness in keeping their information current. Of course, the GFO has to give the DFOs access to their committee data for the DFOs to keep their information up to date or the GFOs have to do the data entry themselves.

All Annual Reports

The **All Annual Reports** hyperlink (which is really useful only after the end of the FY and all of the data is reported and verified) should display a single, continuous, scrollable, printer-friendly page of all the annual reports for all the committees in the group for that year. Depending upon the number of committees in the group, this page can take a while to load and display. This page can also be saved to a **Word** document and once in Word, the user can add page breaks and other formatting features to display the reports as formally as required. To return from this page to the **Committee List** page is an instance of when the GFO will have to use the browser **Back** button.

Manage Users

The **Users List** hyperlink displays the list of agency users responsible to the GFO and their permissions on the system. After the Committee Management Officer gives the GFO status on the system, the GFO can

- Add users at the DFO levels of use,
- Control whether users can edit the current year's data,
- Determine when a user will have access to the system, and
- Look up the user's password.

By clicking the hot key, which is the underlined number at the left of the row of user information, or by clicking the **FormView** Navigation Button, the GFO displays a user record to edit. The **Form View** Button selects the first record in the list to display. The **Hot Link** displays the record of the user identified in the **Logon** field.

User Form Rules and Codes to Assign User Rights

On the **User Form** the GFO will find buttons to <u>Filter</u> for a specific Logon, **Save** an edited record, add a **New** user, and return to the **Users List**, but will not find a button to delete a user. Once a user is added to the system, they are kept in the system so that there is an audit trail regarding who created or edited the data in the system during what year. When adding a new user, the GFO should add the name and contact information and the user's rights. The DFO will have to complete any contact-information-fields that are left blank when they first logon.

The rules and codes regarding the user information and access rights (permission levels) follow.

1) The user's **Logon** name and password together form a unique key field that is not duplicated within the agency or even in the whole system. The username (**Logon**) should be in the form of the user's government email address, but it can be simply a combination of the first letter from the first name and the full last name. The user should be easily identifiable from the username.

2) The password can be any combination of up to 16 characters and it can be duplicated in the system with other users' passwords. If the same user has more than one login, each of the user's passwords must be unique. Passwords are generally a system's weakest point of defense from unwanted intrusion, so, unfortunately, the best password is such a complicated combination of letters, numbers, and characters that you will never be able to remember it.

3) The GFO can add users at the DFO **Permission Level**. The DFO can only view and edit their single committee when logged on; the GFO can view and edit all the committees in the group.

4) **Permission Access** is either read-only: **1**, or edit: **2**. A user needs a Permission Access of **2** to make changes to the data and add new information.

5) The **Start Date** is the earliest date that a user can logon and the **End Date** is the last date that a user can logon.

6) The **Active User** can be set to "**Yes**" or "**No**". This field is used to turn a user's logon rights on or off without having to change all the other settings.

7) The **Committee** for which the DFO user is responsible can be set from the "DFO Committee" pull-down. The pull down list will display all the possible committees for the agency, and the GFO clicks on the correct committee.

8) The CMO must set up a group before a GFO can be assigned to that group. A GFO must be set up and assigned to a group before she can set up DFOs for that group. The GFO should always click **"Save"** before leaving the page after completing any changes to a user form.

The **Filter** button on the **User Form** displays a filter page so that the GFO can quickly find a user record based on the most relevant criteria. The **New** button displays a blank data entry page for adding a new user. The GFO returns to the full read-only **User List** page with the **Users List** button.

To use the Filter page, the GFO selects criteria like **Yes** for the **Active User** text box and clicks the **Apply** button. The **Cancel** button cancels the **Filter** page.

To create a new user, the GFO click the New button on the Form View page shown above.

The GFO fills in all the contact information and applies the permissions and rules to create a new user and then "saves" the new user by clicking the **Save New** button. The GFO can abandon the new record by clicking the **Cancel** button.

Editing a Committee's Data

The GFO should check out the DFO System Manual for a thorough introduction to the process of editing the committee information.

The GFO has complete editing rights to all the committee data and all changes are made, meetings and reports and members are added through the **Committee Menu** page. The links below display the editable pages. The menu options include

- General Info,
- Recommendations.
- Reports,
- Meetings,
- Costs,
- Justifications,
- Members,
- Sub-Committees,
- Annual Report,
- DFO Info,
- GFO Info,
- CMO Info,
- **Committee Decision Maker**,
- View Charter,
- Web Site (if the committee has one)**, and**
- Mark Verified**.**

The Rest of the Story

There are many other features and reports available to assist the GFO in the FACA Database online system. Most of the other features are found and described in the Public System part of the manual, although we will continuously be adding additional heads-up reports/alerts specifically for GFO use. However, all of the features, data, and reports are only as useful and accurate as the data entered and kept up-to-date, primarily by the DFOs or their designees. The DFOs, keeping the system up-to-date as frequently as possible, whenever the committee data changes, or even on a weekly basis, transforms the FACA database into a rare commodity in government, a useful, interagency data-sharing and management tool. The FACA Database online system has been available since 1997. It is a living system in the sense that it has grown in usefulness and functionality (and size) every year that it has existed. Some of the improvement is due to the improved technology of the Internet, and a little can be counted due to the increasing skill of the development team. However, most of the improvement is due to the feedback, patience, and willingness of the users to participate both in the development process and with on-line record keeping. The FACADatabase is truly a shared system that belongs to all of us.