

Summary:

As part of Project Aim 2020, NRC is seeking input on current work activities that should be shed (stopped), performed with fewer resources, or performed with a different priority.

Introduction:

The NRC has grown significantly in the last ten years. The growth was largely, but not exclusively, driven by anticipated increases in regulated activities. Examples of significant increases in activity can be found in new reactor licensing and construction, new fuel facility licensing and construction, and new uranium recovery licensing.

The growth occurred across the agency. It occurred in the regulatory offices – technical, legal, and advisory. It also occurred in the corporate offices that recruited, housed, and provided information technology for the expanding regulatory staff.

Some of the new work has been, or is now being, successfully completed. Also, some of the anticipated work did not materialize as the result of unanticipated changes. Examples of unanticipated changes include the plentiful supply of inexpensive natural gas and decreased growth in the demand for electricity. Not all factors that drove growth will change. An example is the heightened sensitivity to computer network security.

The NRC recognizes the need to reduce its size to reflect the reduction in workload and the national budget environment. Project Aim 2020 is NRC's systematic approach to ensuring continued effective performance of its safety and security mission while adjusting to the currently projected level of regulatory and corporate support activity and while achieving efficiency gains. Project Aim 2020 also revises existing internal processes to make the agency more nimble and agile when workload changes occur in the future.

In developing the Project Aim 2020 framework, over 2000 suggestions on the future state of the NRC and what we should do differently were collected from staff and external sources. Those comments were synthesized into the Strategies and Recommendations outlined in SECY-15-0015, "Project Aim 2020 Report and Recommendations."

Common Prioritization and Re-baselining NRC's work:

One Commission approved task within Project Aim 2020 is the review of planned work for fiscal year (FY) 2017. These work activities will be evaluated using NRC's core mission, NRC's "Principles of Good Regulation¹," and NRC "Values²." The results of this evaluation will allow ranking the various work activity from those with the closest ties to the mission, principles, and values of the agency through those with the least close ties.

¹ Independence, Clarity, Openness, Reliability, and Efficiency

² Integrity, Service, Openness, Commitment, Cooperation, Excellence, and Respect

NRC anticipates that the systematic review of work will identify activities that can be shed, performed with fewer resources, or performed with different priority. This re-baselining should also ensure that the NRC performs those work activities necessary to fulfill its regulatory mission.

NRC's external stakeholders are an excellent source of information on the connection between the work they have an active interest in, and the NRC's mission, principles, and values. For this reason, input from stakeholders is being solicited for use in the task of establishing a common prioritization and re-baselining.

The Commission has provided the following guidance that is helpful in considering how to evaluate and prioritize NRC's work activities:

"The NRC should always seek to achieve the highest standards of performance, but it must do so with a balanced perspective of the significance of the activity in the overall context of our regulatory responsibility and with the overarching objective to be focused on the right things while enhancing its ability to adjust to the changing environment by being more agile when it comes to supporting higher-priority work that arises."

"The NRC should identify and consider additional opportunities to apply more broadly risk insights to enhance our decision-making beyond traditional technical issues. Decision-making that uses a graded approach should also be applied to determining priorities and the level of resources dedicated to our corporate and infrastructure programs."

"The process should also consider what work is most critical to the safety and security mission of the agency and how the relevant NRC staff subject matter experts would prioritize this work consistent with the agency's mission, values, and the Principles of Good Regulation. If through this process, the staff finds that the agency expends resources on tasks that may no longer be necessary, but which the staff was previously directed to perform, the staff should propose changes for Commission review and approval along with a discussion of why the task was originally required and why it is no longer needed."

One important point to understand is that Common Prioritization and Re-baselining is not the only part of Project Aim 2020 that is intended to identify and develop potential efficiency improvements. Based on time and resource constraints, process or cultural changes that require an initial investment of resources and some period of time to develop more efficient alternatives are not likely to be acted on within the Re-baselining effort. These type of business practice improvements will be prioritized and worked in an on-going basis after completion of the one-time Re-baselining effort.

Opportunity for Public Input:

Input on the following questions will assist the NRC staff. We request you be as specific as possible. NRC will also accept written comments and views on its Common Prioritization and Re-baselining initiatives through September 15, 2015. Comments received after that date will be considered as time permits. Comments can be provided to the following e-mail address:

ProjectAim2020.Resource@nrc.gov

- 1) What activities currently being performed, if any, do you consider unnecessary for the NRC to accomplish its mission in a manner consistent with its Principles of Good Regulation and Values? Please explain why.
- 2) What activities do you view as our lowest priority in the accomplishment of our mission? Please explain why.
- 3) What activities, if any, should be performed on a less frequent basis? Please explain why.
- 4) Which activities should more broadly consider risk insights to enhance NRC's decision-making, including beyond traditional technical issues? Please provide specific examples where the use of a graded approach could be applied to determining priorities and level of effort, not only in technical areas, but also corporate and infrastructure programs.

If you have questions about this opportunity, please send them to:

ProjectAim2020.Resource@nrc.gov